American Society of Agronomy
Crop Science Society of America
Soil Science Society of America

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Meeting with a Member of Congress or congressional staff is an excellent way to develop a long-term relationship with your Congressional delegation.

Before your meeting…

Email the Science Policy Office. They can help you contact the member's office and will provide you with relevant information and communication and advocacy training.

Do your homework. Before you go into each office, check if the Member is on any relevant committees. Check their website to see the issues they care about and think about how they could tie into your conversation.

Dress appropriately. We encourage you to wear business or business casual attire at your meeting. Remember to bring business cards if you have them.

Be on time and be prepared to wait. At the scheduled time of the meeting, tell the office staff assistant you have a meeting. Include the time of your meeting and staffer's name with whom you are meeting. Remember that changes in the legislative calendar and office activity can sometimes mean Members and their staff are dealing with multiple meetings, so you might have to wait.

During your meeting….

Introduce yourself. If there are several people at the meeting, allow each participant to introduce themselves. After everyone has been introduced, one participant can begin by saying thank you for taking the meeting and that you are here to discuss food, agriculture and natural resources research.

Be succinct. Most meetings last only about 20 minutes, so plan on getting to the point quickly.

Use a short anecdote or offer facts that illustrate the value of food, agriculture and natural resources research. Try to tie in an economic or local impact, e.g., jobs created, money coming back to the district/state. Answer the "so what?" or "why should I care?" question

Don't monopolize the conversation and don't patronize or complain to the Member or staff. Be sure to listen to the staff member and respond to their questions or interests. Avoid partisan comments and try to stay positive.

Take notes, especially if there is anything the member and/or staffer wants follow-up information on. Write down any questions that are asked (especially ones that you couldn't answer).

Ask for a photo. Even if you are not scheduled to meet with the member of Congress in person, ask if they are in the office and available for a quick photo. (Sometimes this can get you a minute or two of face-to-face time!) Make sure to get a photo if you are meeting with the member of Congress.

Thank member/staffer for their time.

After your meeting…

Fill out a meeting evaluation form provided by the Science Policy Office. Make note of who you met with, what you discussed and any questions that are asked. This information will help the Science Policy Office continue to build a relationship with this office.

Send a thank you note. The Science Policy Office staff will provide you with a template for drafting thank you notes. Thank-you notes should be emailed to staff and faxed or mailed to members. Be sure to:

- Respond to any informational requests
- Remind them that you are a resource for their office

Maintain Contact. Reach out to the staff members you met with <u>at least twice a year.</u> You won't always get a response, but reminding them you a resource is an important part of building a relationship with that office.