

Congressional meeting guide

The American Institute of Architects

For use by AIAS Students

A framework for effective Congressional meetings

IMPORTANT LEGAL NOTICE

Before you begin any meetings on Capitol Hill, it is important to know the legal barriers that limit what you can and cannot talk about on government property.

It is illegal to discuss political activities of any kind with a MOC or their staff while inside the U.S. Capitol and House and Senate office buildings. This includes any discussion relating to federal political races or federal political donations, such as those given from AIA's political action committee, ArchiPAC. Every Congressional office staff and MOC knows these rules. However, if for any reason you find the conversation navigating away from policy and more into politics, kindly inform the MOC or staffer that you're here to discuss the policy issue, not any politics.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

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BEFORE THE MEETING

- Review this guide in full.
- Assign roles for your group. See below for the "In the meeting" section to determine which roles should be assigned.
- Review the issue talking points and issue brief so that you know what to say in the meeting. The issue brief is your "leave behind" document for the Members of Congress (MOC) and their staff. The talking points are for you to brief yourself about the issue so you can communicate effectively about it with the MOC/staff. Remember, these documents are not a script. They are there to help guide you through the conversation with the MOC/staffer. While it is important to stay "on message," please feel free to explain these issues in your own style and words.
- It's important to determine "the ask" and who is going to deliver it before the meeting begins. Make sure one person is prepared to make "the ask." To be clear, this is the action that you want the MOC to take. In this case, AIA wants the MOC to support the bill.
- Try to arrive several minutes before your meeting. Your assigned lobbyist will help you navigate Capitol Hill.

IN THE MEETING

Introductions

All: Go around the table and have each group member introduce themselves, being sure to mention where they are from and/or where they go to school. Share any relevant stories or personal connections to the MOC or the office. Please keep introduction short.

Speaker 1: Very briefly, give the MOC or their staff background on AIA and AIAS.

Very briefly, review the initial reason that you asked to meet with the MOC. Turn the meeting over to Speaker 2 who will tell the MOC/staffer more about the issue.



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Issue Discussion

Speaker 2: Using the provided issue brief, explain the issue to the MOC/staffer.

The very first thing to ask the MOC/staffer, before you launch into briefing them about the issue, is “how much do you know about this issue.” It will help you frame your talking points based on their response.

After hearing their response, begin your briefing. Feel free to add examples which illustrate the importance of the issue to you and to the industry more broadly. Anecdotes tying the issue back to their state or district are particularly effective.

The other members of the group should feel free to interject with relevant supporting information. Turn the meeting over to Speaker 3 who will make the ask to the MOC/staffer.

Make the ask

Speaker 3: When making the ask, ask it directly to the MOC/staffer, then pause, and wait for their response. If the MOC/staffer supports your position, thank them. If the MOC/staffer does not support your position, ask them why and if there is anything that could get them to support your position.

Thank you and leave behind

At the end of your meeting, remember to thank them for their time and leave behind a copy of the one-page issue brief.

AFTER THE MEETING

Making the connection

Regardless of their position on the issue, it is important to connect the staff in the room to the AIA Federal Relations Team in Washington DC. Your assigned lobbyist will make that connection. If you are able to send a thank you email within the next week, that will go a long way to reiterate your message and leave a positive impression in the staff's minds.





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