

Tips for a Congressional Visit

Below are some tips for planning your meeting with your congressional representatives. These are ideas to help you formulate your presentation. It is recommended that you take these ideas and tweak them to fit your personality and style. Keep it simple and keep it personal. Nothing beats an authentic approach – BE YOURSELF! ☺

- Do some background research on your representative. Be familiar with some areas of policy that he/she has addressed in your area that you feel are important.
- Dress neatly and conservatively.
- Remember that you're trying to build a relationship, so your disposition/approach should be polite and reasonable. Relax.
- Introduce yourself – Name, exchange pleasantries.
- Establish relationship with elected official as a voting constituent: Tell them your voting location/city-Senatorial District/or if US Rep, Rep District.
- If you know some of the local political leaders from your voting district, do a little name dropping. Example, "My uncle, James Smith is the precinct chair of #232.
- Thank the official for something if at all possible. Perhaps a policy, program or piece of legislation that he/she supported that aligns with your values.
- Give them information about your academic life: Name of University/major/classification.
- Why you are here – participating in a mentoring program known as Minorities Striving and Pursuing Higher Degrees of Success that focuses on providing professional development opportunities for underrepresented groups in STEM fields.
- Give them a personal testimonial about your experiences in the MS PHD'S Program. Remember, compelling personal stories will stick in people longer than facts—although you should also have some facts to help validate your stories.
- Tell them a little about your future aspirations--profession/areas of scientific interest/potential benefit to society/neighborhood/nation, etc. and how programs such as MS PHD'S are helping to lay the foundation for accomplishing your future goals.
- Ask what the elected official could do to secure sufficient funding for the Program so that the program will be here to assist other students in their (elected Official's) district as the program has assisted you.
- Let them know that through funding the MS PHD'S Program, they are in fact helping to prepare the next generation of scientist from their district.
- Be receptive to questions from the official. If you don't know an answer, say so. If the Member or staffer asks you for information that you do not have, say that you do not have it but will get it in a few days. Do not try to avoid the question or change the subject. Be straightforward about what you know and what you do not know. Committing to get back to them gives you an opportunity to prove that you are credible and trustworthy.
- Follow up with the office by sending a thank you letter to the Member or staffer you met with, along with along any additional information and materials you pledged to provide.
- Building a relationship with an office is the best way to make your voice heard on Capitol Hill. A meeting gets your foot in the door - it's in the follow-up that you're going to see results.