



Effective Communications with Congress

Meeting with a Member of Congress or congressional staff is a very effective way to convey a message about an issue such as the importance of supporting funding for USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI). The meeting also offers you the opportunity to develop a long-term relationship with your Congressional delegation.

Meeting Guidelines

- 1. Dress appropriately.** We encourage you to wear business or business casual attire at your meeting.
- 2. Be on time and be prepared to wait.** Changes in the legislative calendar and office activity often means Members and their staff are dealing with multiple meetings. Space can be limited in Congressional offices, so be flexible. It's not a sign of disrespect if you end up having your meeting in the hallway.
- 3. Be prepared and succinct.** Most meetings can last only about 15 minutes so plan on getting to the point quickly.
- 4. Use a short anecdote or offer facts** that illustrate the value of ARS and/or AFRI. Ideally, economic impacts, e.g., jobs created, money coming back to the district/state. Answer the "so what?" or "why should I care?" question.
- 5. Limit the presentation.** If coming in as a group, select a spokesperson (this should always be a constituent) and a common strategy to come across as a cohesive team. Not everyone participating in the meeting needs to speak to get the talking points across, but complementary examples across the disciplines are valuable.
- 6. Don't monopolize the conversation and don't patronize or complain** to the Member or staff. Remember you are part of a team of scientists with the common goal of encouraging support for science research and education.
- 7. Follow-up** the meeting with a thank-you letter to the Member and staffer and offer to be a source of information in the future.