

SAMPLE REPRESENTATIVE MEETING AGENDA

Be the Peace!

Remember through the entire preparation process, team building (if any) and particularly the scheduling and meeting to hold yourself in the most peaceful manner possible. We want to embody the values and principles we are advocating for. Get support before hand if needed (maybe you are meeting with an office that is opposed to many of your values?). They are more likely to “hear” you and welcome you back if you can connect with them and be gracious. Speaking your truth doesn’t have to be done in anger. Anger, etc, most often alienates.

Meet early: Meet up 15-30 minutes early for every meeting to polish plans with your team. Also can be challenging to navigate the buildings.

Overview of “the talk”:

- **The problem:** Choose some data to highlight the issue or “problem.” Using local data is especially powerful. Find one or two statistics that are most compelling to you. Use those as your anchor.
- **The solution:** Describe how the legislation or issue will contribute to solving the problem.
- **Make it Real:** Tell a story. Bring your heart and experience into the conversation to create that personal connection. Something personal that creates a picture of or evokes something deeper. 1- 2 minutes max.
- **The Request:** What is it you want your member to do?

Introductions

Everyone in the groups should briefly introduce themselves and say where they are from. (Name, city of residence, occupation is enough. Make yourselves real and open. Saying, “I am a teacher and mother of a ten-month-old baby,” is a good opening, so is “I’m a truck driver and grandpa,” etc.) Be sure to ask the aide about themselves, too! You can ask them about what brought them to this work, what their area of focus is, etc. They all got into this work because they care, give them space to share why they care, it will help get them into a heart space. **It also provides you with valuable information about things they care about, and you can adjust your sharing accordingly.**

Share a little bit about your group. Below is what we suggest saying to explain the legislative work of The Peace Alliance

The Peace Alliance advocates for evidence-based legislation and policy that will enhance our capacity to reduce violence and build sustainable peace both domestically and internationally.

General Tips:

- Always maintain a respectful dialogue, even when you disagree.

- Facilitator keeps things on track. When you're in the meeting, the conversation can get away from the original agenda because of a question the aide asks or an opinion that they share. The facilitator's job is to help the group smoothly transition through the conversation and make sure that everyone is included.
- The meeting is a conversation and part of building a relationship—add something personal. You can make it personal by sharing what has drawn you to this work/cause or any programs or experiences that have inspired you. Maybe a relevant experience of violence that impacted you. This is the kind of thing that can pull at heartstrings and help the congressperson or aide connect better with you or inspire them to engage in our initiatives.
- Build trust by being truthful in everything you say. If you don't know something, offer to find out and follow up with an answer.
- Be persistent, but not harassing. Congressional staffers are busy and may not return your follow-up calls immediately, but do not give up.
- Be aware of how much time you have and respect the time that has been given to you.

MAKE THE CASE:

You might begin your meeting by thanking the member (or their staff member) for agreeing to meet with you and for having taken some position or stand that you support. This will set a positive tone.

Connecting issues to your district or state

Talk about how violence (domestic, school, gang) is affecting your community, congressional district, or state. If possible, provide one or two local statistics about crime/violence. If you can't find any, [national numbers](#) are still very helpful. Talk about the impact on families of military members, the cost to taxpayers of war, and the current economic needs of your community that could be helped by saving millions of dollars with international peacebuilding efforts.

Highlight local programs that could be helped by DoP or Youth PROMISE Act.

Questions

- Answer any questions that the aide may have. Your group should make yourselves familiar with these materials and consider bringing printed versions to your lobby meeting.
- If you don't know the answer, let the aide know that you will find out for them. This is a great opportunity to continue to build a relationship after the meeting is over. Don't lie or make something up.

Requests:

At the end of the meeting, ask for your member of Congress to support the bill. Review the "request" ideas listed below, and ask for his or her own ideas as well. Ask your Congressperson what he or she would be willing to do to help you. Be specific. For example, you could ask a staffer, "Would you review this with the Congress(wo)man, and ask him or her if he or she would speak at a public event in [Hometown USA]? When should I check back with you on this?"

- a. Become a co-sponsor of the bill? (even if they are already a co-sponsor, we are looking to create CHAMPIONS!!!).
- b. Attend the briefing on the bill scheduled for_____?
- c. Write a letter to your colleagues? To the committee chairs that the bill has been referred to?
- d. Speak at a public event within the district?
- e. Write an op-ed for a local newspaper? (You might offer to draft something for them)
- f. What else do you or your staff think you could do to help us get this legislation enacted?

Wrap-Up

- Closing the Meeting
- Thank the aide for meeting with you.
- Confirm any agreements for follow up and provide contact information for a point person in your group.

Meeting Outline:

1.) Thank you/ Introductions – 5-6 minutes

a. Thank your member of Congress for the meeting. If applicable, thank your member for an action that he or she has done that you appreciate.

b. Ask a question that will allow the member and aide to introduce themselves more fully. This helps establish a real connection. For example, you can ask, “What brought you to Congress? What was your vision for entering politics?”

2.) Introduction to the Legislation – 2-3 minutes

a. Basic background/ overview of the purpose and effect of the bill.

3.) Share your individual experiences and emphases.

a. Why are the bill’s purpose and specific provisions compelling to each of you?

4.) **Welcome feedback, questions, or comments** from member of Congress and staff regarding the bill or issue.

5.) Requests

a. Become a co-sponsor of the bill?

- b. Attend the briefing on the bill scheduled for _____?
- c. Write a letter to your colleagues? To the committee chairs that the bill has been referred to?
- d. Speak at a public event within the district?
- e. Write an op-ed for a local newspaper? (You might offer to draft something for them)
- f. What else do you or your staff think you could do to help us get this legislation enacted?

6.) **Wrap-up**

- a. Set up necessary follow-up with contact information and expected response times.
- b. Thank them for their time and attention.

FOLLOW UP

- Follow up is KEY to success. You must follow up promptly and cheerfully. Be persistent at each task and thank them for every bit of effort they invest in helping you, even just reading the bill.
- Send a handwritten thank you note to the Congress member or staff you met with.
- Send a letter to the Editor of your local newspaper, thanking your Rep for co-sponsoring either or both bills. MOC appreciate public praise for what they have done and rarely get it.
- Attend local Town Hall meetings that your representative holds throughout the year to raise the subject of reducing violence and incarceration through programs that are proven to be effective, particularly among youth. Please attend as many of the local meetings as possible and bring friends.