

Do your homework.

1. **Review the NFU Talking Points in your packet.** Become comfortable with the topics. Look at the topics from a personal point of view. How will the issue affect your farm, town, state, family, community?
2. **Research the member's state or district.** USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) is a great place to start. NASS provides data on agriculture in each district which will help you understand what the elected official will likely prioritize.

Step 1—Go to: <https://www.nass.usda.gov/>

Step 2—Click on: Census > Congressional District > State > District

3. **Visit with your team members.** Find out where the expertise is—who knows what, who can take the lead, and who can best provide backup.
4. **Get organized.** Make sure to divide the workload before each meeting by organizing the order of introductions and speaking time. Who on the team will discuss what? Who has first-hand experience on the issue? Make sure everyone on the team knows the NFU policy on the subjects and where you all stand on the issue so that you are as effective as possible by having consensus on messaging. Team captains are not expected to do all the talking—each team member has valuable experience to share. You may want to alternate who takes the lead.
5. **Make notes** on specific items or examples for your own reference but be open to other topics.

Before your meeting.

1. **Know who you're meeting with.** A meeting with a Congressional staffer can be just as important as a meeting with the elected official. Developing a relationship with a staff member means your message is getting to the member of Congress and you have made a useful contact for the future.
2. **Be flexible.** The member of Congress or staff person may want to talk about other things or may have reasons to disagree with you. Prepare to overcome objections by acknowledging that there are other viewpoints. Make sure to clearly describe an opposing argument before providing a counterargument.
3. **Be open to opportunities.** How, where, and when you meet with someone is part planning (a scheduled appointment), part chance (bumping into someone in the hallway), and nearly all a matter of personal style (some people like to talk while others like to write). You will have a list of scheduled appointments but keep alert and flexible in case new opportunities arise.
4. **Judge your time investment.** For those who always support your positions, you can stop by and say “thanks”; for those who never support your positions, just stop by and let them know you are in town; and for those you are new to you or your issue, spend some time educating them.
5. **Don't skip scheduled meetings.** If you are running late or if you absolutely can't make it to a scheduled meeting, call the contact listed on your schedule for that Congressional office. If a meeting runs long and conflicts with your next appointment, send a member of your team ahead to start the meeting.
6. **Call the staff contact for your next meeting as you approach the Congressional office buildings.** Procedures for entering Congressional office buildings now require a staff member to escort visitors through the security checkpoint and many offices are located a long distance from the visitor entrance.

During your meeting.

1. **Be brief.**
2. **Be polite.**
3. **Give background information.** Discuss the NFU Talking Points by connecting policy with experience. Explain why a policy is important and share examples.
4. **Discuss. Do not argue.**
5. **Try to get a commitment.**
6. **Leave behind materials.** Make sure the person you are meeting with can access the NFU Talking Points by leaving behind a copy of the half-page document, which includes a QR code and address to the NFU website.
7. **Show gratitude.** Thank them for the opportunity to meet.

After your visit.

1. **Take notes** while your visit is still fresh on your mind. Compare impressions with your team members and **fill out the “gold sheet” meeting evaluation form that can be accessed on the NFU fly-in webpage.**
2. **Share** important commitments or necessary follow-ups with NFU staff.
3. **Create a follow-up strategy.**
4. **Send a thank you email** to the person you met with summarizing your understanding of the meeting and remind them of their commitments.
5. **Stay in touch.**

The office of any member of Congress may be reached by calling the **U.S. Capitol switchboard, 202-224-3121**. Call 202-225-1772 for the current status of bills. The phone number for the agriculture secretary’s office is 202-720-3631. Reach the White House comment desk at 202-456-1111 or fax to 202-456-2461.

Other contact information is available from the following websites:

<http://www.senate.gov>

<http://www.house.gov>

<http://www.whitehouse.gov>

Stay informed. There are number of ways to stay informed and involved. You can keep up with what is going on in Washington through your state and national Farmers Union publications.

NFU’s e-newsletter provides weekly news updates on Farmers Union activities both in and out of Washington.

You can also sign up for NFU’s email updates which provide timely information. Sign up for these periodic e-mails at www.nfu.org.

For more information, contact:

National Farmers Union

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Washington, D.C. 20001

Phone: 202-554-1600

Fax: 202-554-1654

On the Web: www.nfu.org