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STRATEGICS

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL HILL VISIT

Before the visit

- Call the Washington, D.C., office and ask for the scheduler; tell him/her that you are an elected official and would like to meet with the Senator/Representative while you are in town.
- Gather statistics and facts you can use to discuss the issues while also tying them back specifically in some way to your community or to the State of North Carolina. Demonstrate how your county has benefitted or would benefit from the program you are discussing.
- Research your Senators and Representatives to learn about their background, hobbies, previous service at the state or local level, current committee positions, key votes and their position on issues impacting counties. (There is a much better chance of input on drafting legislation by Members who serve on the committee(s) with jurisdiction.)
- Bring plenty of business cards with you.

During the visit

- Give your business card to each staff person in the meeting, and ask for theirs.
- **Silence your cell phone** and do not read or send electronic messages during meetings.
- Dress professionally but **wear comfortable shoes**; there will be a lot of walking.
- Do not be late! Allow for enough time to get through security (lines can be long). Do not wear excessive jewelry or carry unnecessary items in your pockets. You may have to remove your shoes.
- Be prepared to wait. Congressional schedules are very hectic and can change quickly. Members and their staff may be late.
- If traveling with a group, decide prior to the meeting who will open the discussion and what everyone else will say during the meeting.
- Be prepared that you may spend more time with a staff person than the Member of Congress, who may just drop in or have to leave the meeting before its conclusion. Don't underestimate the influence staff members have. Members of Congress put great trust in these individuals, and they will be delivering your message to the Member of Congress.
- Be concise and hit most important points first. Offer to follow-up with additional briefing materials if more information is needed. If you are asked to provide specific legislative details, it is fine to recommend that someone from NCACC will follow up.
- Put politics aside. Never discuss fundraisers or political contributions.
- Be specific and make the "ask" – share NCACC's position and NACo's position on the issues you are discussing and ask the Member of Congress (or their staff on the Member's behalf) if he/she is willing to support this position by, for example, signing a letter, cosponsoring a bill or offering an amendment. Ask how you can help them do that.
- If a meeting runs late and it appears you will be late for your next meeting, call the next office and let them know when to expect you.

After the visit

- When you return home, send a thank you note by e-mail to everyone you met with and remind them of your positions on issues and why they should support these positions.
- Schedule a meeting with the district office to introduce yourself and also brief them on the issues.
- Send periodic emails to D.C. and District staff to share information about the county's priorities.

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