

TIPS FOR MEETING WITH POLICYMAKERS

Meeting with your Senators and Representatives in person is an extremely effective way to influence your elected officials. Below are some helpful tips for scheduling and attending a successful meeting.

Working with partners & setting up meetings: Your voice is amplified when you partner with others to achieve a mutual goal. Invite other local leaders, such as tribal council members, tribal tax commissioners, tribal CFOs, etc., to your meeting.

Setting up a meeting: [Call your Member's district office](#) and ask how to submit a meeting request (you may have to submit an email request to his/her district scheduler with the necessary information). If you are unable to secure a meeting with the Member and can only meet with a staff person, it is still worthwhile to take the meeting.

Prepare beforehand: Research your Member's stance on general tax policy. If your representative values job creation and local government, develop your talking points to incorporate those issues as well as others. After deciding on specific points to raise, practice a role play of the visit, and give yourself time to review your materials.

Be on time: Arrive on time, but be prepared to wait. Members often have multiple meetings and hearings scheduled on a single day and may be running late.

Make an introduction & state your purpose: Introduce yourself and your tribe/organization to the Member or staff and thank them for setting aside the time to meet.

Focus on local issues & state your position: Personalize and localize your request as much as possible. You do not need to be an expert on tax issues, but it is very helpful if you can describe the effect of certain tax issues on tribal self-governance. For example, if tribes are unable to finance projects like other governments, they are forced to operate their governments with fewer tools to address economic development and unemployment needs.

Keep your request short and make a specific ask. Tell the Member what you want (*e.g.*, for example "We ask for your support for amendments to the Internal Revenue Code that would exclude benefits received through tribal social programs from inclusion within gross income."), why you want it, and ask for his/her position on the issue.

Ask how you can be helpful: "How can my tribe/organization be most effective in supporting your position?" Never promise anything you cannot deliver, but offer to do what is possible and helpful.

You don't have to be an expert: Do not be afraid to say that you don't know something. If someone asks you a question that you do not know the answer to, tell them you will find out the answer and get back to them with the information.

Bring leave-behind material: Feel free to use the information from this toolkit to develop leave-behind material.

Always follow up: Thank the Member and staff for the meeting, get the staffer's business card, and follow up with a thank you email. Remind the Member of the issue and the commitment he/she made to your cause in the note

If you are unable to attend an in-person meeting, you can always call the Member's district office to speak to a staff member and voice your opinion or concerns.

Calling Your Members of Congress: A Call Script for Tribal Advocates

Please [click here](#) to find the phone number of your Senators and Representative. When you call their Washington, DC or district offices, consider delivering the following talking points to the staff member or intern who answers your call:

Introduce yourself

[I am a constituent of Senator/Representative [insert name] from [insert name of reservation, village, or hometown] and I would like you to relay my comments to the Senator/Congressman/Congresswoman about an important tax issue affecting Indian tribes];

State the issue and make a specific ask

[e.g., “I ask for the Senator’s/Representative’s support for an amendment to the Internal Revenue Code that would repeal the unnecessary and burdensome ‘*essential government function*’ test used to regulate tribal government bond offerings.];

Briefly, tell why making this change makes sense

[e.g., “Currently, Indian tribal governments are unfairly burdened by restrictions on government bond offerings that do not apply to other governments. This is wholly unnecessary, and leaves tribes with fewer tools to combat unemployment and economic development needs than other governments – while unemployment statistics show that Indian tribes consistently need more assistance in these areas than their sister governments. Further, in December 2011 – the U.S. Treasury issued a Report recommending that Congress repeal the *essential government function* standard used only on tribal government bond offerings. I’d be happy to provide a copy of that report to your office.”]; and

Repeat the ask and thank them for their time

[e.g., “Once again, I urge Senator/Representative [insert name] to support changes to the Code that promote greater fairness for Indian tribes in the government bond arena. Thank you for your time and have a great day.”]