

# DO'S AND DON'TS

## OF MEETING WITH MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

**Do:**

### *Before the Meeting*

- Prepare by reading up on your Member of Congress on their website.
- Learn your Members' committee assignments, where their specialties lie, as well as their personal interests.
- Plan your strategy ahead of time. Decide who will lead the meeting if multiple REALTORS® are attending and what talking points each person will cover.
- Choose talking points. Create a list of 3 to 5 important issues you want to cover and use real examples to communicate your point.
- Organize by making sure you know where the meeting is taking place and at what time. Arrive on time, be polite and well dressed.
- Touch base with your NAR Lobbyist before the meeting so they can provide any insight on the Member's position on the issue.

### *During the Meeting*

- Be sensitive to the amount of time allotted to you. Ask up front and if you get 15-20 minutes with your MOC (or staff) that's great!
- Present the need for what you're asking the Member of Congress to do. Use data or cases you know.
- Present your business card up front.
- Relate situations in his/her home state or district.
- Ask the Representative's or Senator's position and why.
- Show openness to and knowledge of counterarguments and respond to them cordially.
- Admit what you don't know. Offer to try to find out the answer and send information back to the office.
- Spend more time with Members who may not have embraced the NAR position on an issue. You can lessen the intensity of the opposition and perhaps change it.

### *End of the Meeting*

- Get the name and business card of any staff person who sits in on the meeting. This will help you should you need to follow up after the meeting.
- Give the Member and staff any handouts you have on your talking points.
- Thank the office for any support the Member has given on our issues.

### *After the Meeting*

- Write a thank you e-mail to the staff with whom you met and offer to be of any assistance on Real Estate issues in the future.
- Follow through on any promises you made to the Member or staff.
- FILE A FIELD REPORT.
- Send the Member of Congress a note of support when they do or say something that is helpful to NAR. This is especially important if the Member was not initially supportive of an issue and worked with us even if it was unpopular.

**DON'T:**

- Don't fail to show up for your scheduled meeting. Call if you are running late.
- Don't discount Congressional staff. Many Congressional staffers look (and are) young. However, do not assume that such a staffer does not have significant responsibility and the ear of his or her Member. In many offices, the staffer you are meeting with will prepare a summary memo for the Member that carries extreme influence and power.
- Don't overload a Congressional visit with too many issues.
- Don't confront, threaten, pressure or beg.
- Don't be argumentative. Speak with calmness and commitment so as not to put him/her on the defensive.
- Don't overstate the case. Members are very busy and you are apt to lose their attention if you are too wordy.
- Don't expect Members of Congress to be specialists. Their schedules and workloads tend to make them generalists.
- Don't be put off by smokescreens or long-winded answers. Bring the Members back to the point. Maintain control of the meetings.
- Don't make promises you can't deliver.
- Don't be afraid to take a stand on the issues.
- Don't shy away from meetings with legislators with known views opposite your own.
- Don't be afraid to say, "I don't know." Offer to follow up with them after the meeting when you can obtain the correct information.
- When meeting in Washington, D.C. don't be offended if you are asked to meet in a hallway or tight space. Capitol Hill is a busy place with limited real estate. Where you meet does not matter, but what is said and how you conduct yourself does.