



## Advocacy Tactics: Visiting Your Legislator

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### *Visit Your Legislator*

You can visit your legislator in Washington, DC, or in one of the local offices around the state or district. Call ahead to find out where your legislator will be and to make an appointment. You can also meet with staff members in the local office.

### **Your visit will be most effective if you follow a few simple guidelines:**

- Visits in the home district can be hard to arrange, but they often produce very effective meetings. Call ahead to find out your appointment options for a visit with your legislator in his or her home district office.
- Schedule a specific appointment by phone and be sure to tell the staffer that you are a constituent. Inform the staff member of the number of people attending and the issue at hand. A written request may be required.
- Encourage a few others who care about quality cancer care and live in your congressional district to attend with you.
- Bring support materials to your meeting. Download background materials from <http://www.canceradvocacy.org/get-involved/nccs-policy/cccia-background-materials.html> to explain and support the CCCIA.
- Be prompt. Be patient. Be flexible. And don't get offended if your legislator is late. Schedules can be very tight.
- A personal story puts a face on the issue, which is easier to remember and harder to dismiss. Let your legislator know how cancer and specifically the issue at hand have directly affected you and your family. However, do not tell your entire story from beginning to end – instead, use examples from your own experience to *illustrate* why the issue is important.
- Plan ahead. Keep your message simple, direct and brief. Make a specific ask.
- Don't be disappointed if you meet only with a staff member. Staff members are influential even though they are often young. Approach meetings with them as if you're meeting with your legislator. It is important to educate staffers, so they can convey your message to their bosses.
- Try to answer any question you're asked, but if you can't answer the questions during the meeting, get back to them with the requested information.
- Leave your name, address, phone number and e-mail address.
- Follow up with a thank you note outlining what was covered and reiterating your goals. At this time, you should send any information requested by your legislator.

For more information, visit NCCS's Take Action center at <http://www.canceradvocacy.org/get-involved/> or contact us at [advocacy@canceradvocacy.org](mailto:advocacy@canceradvocacy.org) or 301.562.2772.