



Advocate from Anywhere

Building a solid working relationship with your congressional delegation is critical to achieving funding and policy goals that are important to the success of your organization, the AZA community, and the conservation of wildlife. During district work periods, legislators will be in their districts and states meeting with constituents and participating in community events. The [House](#) and [Senate](#) have district work periods throughout the year.

This document includes tips about meeting with members of your congressional delegation when they are home.

What is the timing?

Representatives and senators are in their districts and states for district work periods throughout the year. The longest district work period is typically in August when Congress is in recess for most of the month.

Where should we meet?

Invite legislators and their staff to visit your facility or schedule a meeting with them at their district or state office.

How long is a typical congressional visit or meeting?

Staff may be able to spend a half or whole day at your facility to learn about your programs. Legislators may have less time to get a broad overview or see a specific project. When scheduling a visit, ask the staff how much time they have so you can plan their visit accordingly. If possible, take them on a tour so that they understand the valuable educational, economic, and conservation benefits that your facility is providing to the community. If you are meeting in their office, a typical meeting may last thirty minutes to an hour.

What should I discuss?

Showcase programs of importance to your state and community but also learn about the issues that are priorities for your representative or senator. Their official websites typically have links to biographies, press releases, committee assignments, and legislation that they support.

If you would like to find out how your legislators voted on a particular issue, voting records may be found at the [House](#) and [Senate](#) websites, and GovTrack's [database](#).

What is AZA's advocacy message?

AZA focuses on issues including appropriations, animal care and welfare, science education programs, and wildlife conservation. The AZA [website](#) has more information about key priorities.

Other tips:

- Background materials should be easy to understand and specific to your facility and community
- Avoid acronyms - define basic terms
- Do not assume policymakers will be familiar with specific legislation or know the full scope of the programs at your facility
- Share success stories and discuss the benefits of the programs and services provided by your facility to the community
- Identify a contact person at your facility for policymakers to communicate with in the future
- Consider inviting the policymaker to speak to a large community gathering or media event
- Mention your state and local governments' investments
- Tell the policymakers how they can support your facility
- Offer to be a resource to them in your specific field
- Ask them to support specific federal program funding increases, join the [Congressional Zoo and Aquarium Caucus](#), cosponsor legislation, and support key provisions