



Preparing for Your Lobby Visit

Requesting a Meeting

1. Call your legislator's office and ask to speak to the staffer responsible for scheduling meetings with the member of Congress and the person who handles immigration for the office. Find out their preferred method for appointment requests (fax, email, or over the phone). You can find telephone numbers for the D.C. and district offices on AILA's Contact Congress website.
2. Let the scheduler know the purpose of the meeting and who will be attending. Make sure to mention that you are a constituent!
3. You may have to follow up multiple times to get an appointment scheduled, but be persistent. As a constituent you have the right to meet with your elected officials or their staff.
4. Here is a **sample Appointment-Request E-mail** that you can modify to meet the needs of your own meeting with your legislator.

From: Mandel, Michael [mailto:mmandel@wkgj.com]

To: Connolly, Brenda

Subject: Immigration Advocacy – April 7

Dear Representative Ackerman:

We are contacting you on behalf of the New York Chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA). AILA is a nationwide bar association of over 11,000 lawyers who are involved with various aspects of immigration law. The New York Chapter is the country's largest, with more than 1,100 members. Our members represent U.S. citizens who sponsor foreign family members, U.S. businesses that employ foreign workers, foreign nationals and legal residents faced with deportation, and individuals seeking refuge under U.S. asylum laws, among others. Additional information about AILA and the work we do is available at www.aila.org.

AILA is holding a National Day of Action to focus on immigration in Washington, D.C. on Thursday, April 7, 2011. A delegation from the AILA New York Chapter would like to meet with you and your staff to discuss issues of mutual concern. Among other things, these include visa retrogression (green card unavailability), civil liberties and judicial review, the DREAM/Student Adjustment Act, the H-1B visa crisis, and other processing and enforcement issues relating to our immigration laws.

We welcome the opportunity to meet with you in your office on April 7 to discuss these issues. We will contact your office shortly to set up an appointment. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Michael Mandel & Stuart Reich
Co-Chairs, Congressional Advocacy Committee

Coordinate Your Lobby Team

1. Be organized. Before your meeting, designate a team leader to introduce the issue and handle the flow of the meeting, a secretary to take notes, and assign each participant a priority issue to bring up during the meeting.
2. Make sure everyone in your group is prepared. Brief everyone attending the meeting and make sure they have reviewed any relevant background information ahead of time.
3. If you are going as part of a larger group or coalition, meet ahead of time. It is unwise to have an internal debate or conversation in front of your elected official or his or her staff. Be certain everyone agrees on your group's central message and what you want to ask the legislator to do for you.

Preparing for the Meeting

1. *DO YOUR HOMEWORK!* Know exactly what you want to say and carefully review your message. Research how your Congress member has voted on similar issues in the past. Use the materials provided on the AILA website!
2. If possible, compile information about the impact of specific immigration issues on the legislator's district/state. Do not compile a long list of statistics: your elected officials will not remember them and they will lose their impact. Prepare a few dramatic numbers or anecdotes to illustrate your points. Collect recent local news articles that illustrate the issue. Like most people, legislators and staff more easily remember examples conveyed in human and personal terms.
3. To encourage legislators to support a specific immigration issue, present materials that clearly articulate your position, using specific case examples when possible.
4. Know the counter-arguments and be ready to respectfully answer any questions or disagreements. Call the AILA Advocacy Department for more information and assistance.
5. Prepare a packet to leave with your legislator that could include background information, fact sheets and/or newspaper clippings. Attach your business card(s) to the packet.