

## **TIPS FOR VISITING CONGRESSIONAL REPRESENTATIVES:**

- Being on time is important for your meetings. Plan time to get through security lines, as there will probably be other groups on Capitol Hill and lines may be long.
- If you are late, the staff person or Member of Congress may not be able to accommodate the meeting. As the day goes on, sometimes staffers' meetings get backed up and they may be late.
- Don't be surprised if your meeting takes place in the reception room, cafeteria or hallway. If you are meeting in a public place, be aware that others may hear your conversation.
- Explain that the purpose of your visit. Remember that the people you meet with may not be following the issue(s) you're advocating for as closely as you are, so be prepared to provide background on where things stand.
- Be brief and get to the point quickly. Review your key points ahead of time and refer back to them if necessary. For most meetings, you may have only 15 or 20 minutes to make your case.
- Don't be afraid to admit you don't know something you may be asked. Don't make up answers, but instead offer to follow up later with more information.
- Ask what the lawmaker's position is on the issue(s) you are advocating for. If the Member of Congress supports our position, thank him or her for their continued support. This is important.
- If the Member of Congress does not support your position, briefly discuss your reasons for supporting it. Speak from the heart and give examples. Avoid arguing and never badmouth other members or staff.
- Avoid using extreme partisan comments – you don't want to accidentally offend the Member or staff person.
- Leave the packet with background materials with the staff and encourage them to contact you if they need any additional information.
- The team leader will take notes on the meeting or designate another person to do so. Make sure you have the name of the correct staff person and note any additional follow-up that is required or information that is requested.