



W P E T I Q U E T T E | 2 0 2 5

## **Hill Meeting Etiquette**

**Before You Leave the Hotel** | Be sure to wear shoes that are comfortable for walking long distances and standing for long periods. Pack an umbrella and/or overcoat in anticipation of inclement weather. September in Washington is typically warm and humid – be prepared for temperatures between 70 and 85 degrees.

Consider what materials you will need to have for each of your meetings throughout the day. It can sometimes take up to 25 minutes to get through the metal detectors and security to enter a building; especially in consideration of updated security escort requirements, be sure you plan your arrival and logistics accommodations accordingly. Please dress in business attire, and note that NSBA is not providing transportation back to the hotel from the Hill.

**Contacting Hill Offices** | If you need to contact or locate your lawmakers' offices on Capitol Hill, please refer to the VoterVoice app or call the Capitol Switchboard to connect you to the office: 202-224-3121.

**Before Your Hill Visits** | View the map of the U.S. Capitol complex (see enclosed) to become familiar with the location of the buildings where your scheduled meetings will take place. The Capitol Hill campus consists of the Capitol Building (with a Senate side and House side), the House Office Buildings on the south and the Senate Office Buildings are on the north side of the Capitol. The three principal Senate House Office Buildings include: Russell, Dirksen, and Hart. The three House Office Buildings include: Cannon, Longworth, and Rayburn.

To travel between the U.S. Capitol, House buildings, and Senate buildings, you will need to travel on surface streets, either by walking or by taxi. The nearest Metrorail stations to the Capitol complex are Union Station (Red Line) on the Senate side and Capitol South (Blue Line, Orange Line) on the House side. There is not a direct route between the House and Senate sides using the Metro, but walking between the two sides shouldn't take more than 15 minutes.

Getting turned around in Washington, D.C., is a rite of passage for the city's best advocates. Don't be afraid to ask for directions.

## **Things to Know**

**House/Senate Legislative Bell System** | When you are visiting the Capitol or one of the House or Senate office buildings, you may hear bells ringing and wonder what they mean. These signals inform lawmakers the type of activity that is taking place on the floor of their respective chambers by summoning them for quorum calls, recorded votes or other activities. Hall clocks and wall fixtures in the House/Senate office buildings light up with the respective number of bell rings.

**Food** | There are numerous cafeterias, carry-outs and other eateries located inside of the House, Senate, and Capitol buildings. The schedules regularly change according to the legislative calendar. However, in Union Station (landmark train station on the Senate side), there are a wide assortment of small takeout eateries and full-service restaurants not subject to Congressional schedules. Additionally, on the House side, you can find assorted restaurants along on Pennsylvania Ave., S.E. (past the Library of Congress Building), including Good Stuff (American/burgers), Santa Rosa Tacqueria (Mexican), We The Pizza, and Sweetgreen (salad), to name a few. A few blocks further down Pennsylvania Avenue are the Eastern Market and Barracks Row neighborhoods, with even greater selection.



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**During Your Hill Visits**

**Be Prompt and Patient** | When it is time to meet with a Member of Congress or their staff, be punctual, and be patient. It is not uncommon to have a meeting interrupted due to the Member's crowded schedule or voting. If interruptions do occur, be flexible. It is often the case that when NSBA makes appointments for you at the Washington Presentation, you will be meeting with a staff member, rather than the elected official, which are crucial parts to advocacy and should be regarded just as highly.

If there is a mix-up with the schedule or a meeting was not scheduled for you, NSBA encourages you to drop by the office of your elected official and see if there is anyone available to meet with you for at least a few minutes.

**Be Organized** | You will likely be meeting with your Members of Congress/key staff alongside other Washington Presentation attendees. Individual meetings were set across NSBA members and delegations, so, it is a good idea to get to know your fellow district and/or state attendees before you make your way down Pennsylvania Ave. We have done our best to arrange seating for the awards luncheon in a productive manner to organically facilitate opportunities to connect prior to meetings.

**Be Prepared** | Members are required to take positions on many different issues. It is helpful to share information and examples that clearly demonstrate the impact or benefits associated with a particular issue or piece of legislation. NSBA staff has developed leave-behinds for each office; simply leave one of one pagers with the staff member.

The Members of their staff will likely ask you questions about the issue and/or your company's work. If you do not know the answer to any questions, there's no problem; simply let them know you'll find out and get back to them.

Members of Congress want to represent the best interests of their district or state. Wherever possible, demonstrate the connection between what you are requesting and the interests of the Member's constituency.

**Be Open and Respectful** | You may not share political affiliation with your Members of Congress, but keep in mind that you ARE on the same team when it comes to your District and State. Seek commonalities and ways you can work together - being an effective advocate is all about building relationships.

*Understanding what Members of Congress are discussing and posting about on their social media accounts can better inform how to shape delivery to share the message of an imperative need to act to activate solutions for NSBA's Priority Issues. A quick search of the staffer you may be due to meet with could also provide helpful insights to help you make your point. A post on social media as a follow up to your Hill Meetings tagging and thanking the staffer and Member of Congress for their time, as well as their commitments to the small-business community is a great way to enhance NSBA's reach and influence of WP to reshape small-business policy.*

**Insider Insight**  
*Prepare to meet with your Representative and Senators by reviewing their social media accounts.*

Congress and the Administration are very active on X, but the majority of Members have profiles across all the larger platforms, including LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, and Threads.

NSBA is also active across these platforms (**@NSBAAdvocate**) and greatly appreciates your support engaging with our accounts in your posts about WP25.



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### **Congressional Staff Roles**

*Each Member of Congress has staff assigned to various responsibilities during their term in office. To be most effective in communicating with Congress, it is helpful to know the titles and principal functions of key staff.*

**Chief of Staff |** The chief of staff (CoS) reports directly to the Member of Congress. The CoS usually has overall responsibility for evaluating the political outcome of various legislative proposals and constituent requests. This is usually the person in charge of overall office operations, including the assignment of work and supervision of key staff.

**Legislative Director, Senior Legislative Assistant, or Legislative Correspondent |** The legislative director (LD) is usually the staff person who monitors the legislative schedule and makes recommendations regarding the pros and cons of particular issues. In most congressional offices, there are several legislative assistants (LAs) and legislative correspondents (LCs) whose responsibilities are assigned to staff with particular expertise in specific areas. For example, depending on the responsibilities and interests of the Member, an office may include a different LA for health issues, environmental matters, taxes, small business, and trade, etc.

**Press Secretary or Communications Director |** The press secretary's responsibility is to build and maintain open and effective lines of communication between the Member, their constituency, and the general public. The press secretary is expected to know the benefits, demands, and special requirements of both print and electronic media, and how to promote the Member's views or position most effectively on specific issues.

**Appointment Secretary, Personal Secretary, or Scheduler |** This staff member is usually responsible for allocating a Member's time among the many demands that arise from congressional responsibilities, staff requirements, and constituent requests. The scheduler may also be responsible for making necessary travel arrangements, arranging speaking dates, visits to the district, etc.

**Caseworker |** The caseworker is the staff member usually assigned to help with constituent requests by preparing replies for the Member's signature. The caseworker's responsibilities also may include helping resolve problems constituents present in relation to federal agencies, like Social Security and Medicare issues, Veteran's benefits, passports, etc. There often are several caseworkers in a congressional office.

*Don't hesitate to contact us with questions - [info@NSBAadvocate.org](mailto:info@NSBAadvocate.org) or 202-552-2904.*