12 DOs & DON'Ts

WHEN APPROACHING A CONGRESSIONAL STAFFER
Be professional, transparent and genuine.

Make the issue relevant and personal to the staffer or legislator.

Know ahead of time who will oppose your idea and how to respond to it.

Start off with an email requesting a meeting.

Follow up in a timely manner. Especially if you're clarifying an issue for them.

Stay out of the weeds. The details can come later if he or she is interested.

Ask how you can help the elected official or their staff member.

Use what you've got. If you already know a staffer in an office, ask them who handles your issue.

Gain as an ally a close friend of the member of Congress you would like to approach. Sneaky, but effective.

Be On Time

Spend time rallying stakeholders prior to approaching the legislator.

Relax. They're people too.

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Don't intentionally mislead the staffer — explicitly or implicitly.

Don't refer to the legislator by his/her first name, unless you are a close personal friend.

Don't try and wine and dine a staffer to “buy” his or her time.

Don't go to a meeting without doing your homework first.

Don't take an issue to a member’s office if they historically have never supported that issue.

Drag on and on about your issue. Or worse, about yourself. You're not that interesting.

Don't try and have protracted discussions about policy. They don't have the time.

Mix up the staffer or member’s political party. It happens!

Don't continue to call when an email exchange will work.

Have three double vodkas before you approach a staffer at a party.

Mention the campaign or donations if you're there to talk about your issue.

Bring up your issue if you meet the member of Congress/staffer in the supermarket. They have a right to be off the clock.

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