Setting up a visit with your member of Congress
Compiled by IMIrJ Advocacy Work Team June 2017

Setting up a visit with a Senator, member of Congress, or staffer is always an effective way to communicate key messages and create space for policy change. It just requires a bit of preparation. We hope that the information below may be useful for your faith community as Congress members are on recess or visiting their districts. We invite you to share feedback and results with us at IMIrJ!

1) There are usually 3 ways offices accept meeting requests

When it comes to scheduling meetings, each office usually has one person in the D.C. office and another in the local office; their title is “scheduler.” Each scheduler has a preference on how they accept meeting requests, but usually they prefer requests via Fax, Email or Webform.

To find out which way the scheduler in your local office prefers to receive your request, call the local office and ask to speak with the scheduler. If you don’t get through (schedulers are busy people!), be sure to ask for the scheduler’s name before leaving your message. If you cannot speak directly with the scheduler, your message could be something like this:

“My name is _____ and I’m calling on behalf of Your faith community / Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice. We have many constituents of the Representative [or I am a resident of Oregon for Senators]. We’d like to schedule a meeting with the Rep./Senator when (s)he is back during August Recess. Is it possible to talk with your scheduler? I am wondering the best way to submit that request. Thank you.”

It’s that simple. The staffer answering the phone may connect you with the scheduler or will tell you how to submit the request. Know that the people answering the phone are REALLY NICE PEOPLE and will appreciate your call.

2) Making your request

Once you know the best way to submit the request, it’s time to submit it! There is a sample letter on the next page that is formatted as a Fax, but the content will usually work for e-mail or Webform. It can also be adapted on the spot if you are lucky enough to speak with the scheduler (great!). As a general rule, here are some of the ideas you might want to include in your request:

- **When** would you like to meet? *Flexibility is your friend.* Unless you have a specific event you’d like to invite the member to, you probably want to indicate that you will work around the member’s time.
- **Who** will be there? How many people will be at the meeting? You probably don’t want more than 2-4 people, as congressional offices have very limited space. Because you don’t know the date/time of the meeting, tell the staff person you will get back to them with names of participants. Include your name, address, and the best way to contact you (e-mail and phone).
- **What** is the meeting topic? Be as specific as possible. If it’s on a specific piece of legislation, include the bill number. If you want to discuss concerns in the local immigrant community or your faith community’s desire for local action, go ahead and let them know.

1 Advocacy Work Team members are IMIrJ volunteers with energy and expertise in various fields of advocacy. This document reflects a collective effort to provide a guideline to meeting with members of Congress; this information is subject to change.
• **Where** would you like to have the meeting? Usually your best chance for a visit is to go to the representative’s local office, though if you have a compelling event (especially one with media), you might be able to entice them to come to you.

• **How long** do you want? Ask for 30 minutes - agree to 15 minutes.

### 3. Finally: You can’t always get what you want

But if you try some time, you’ll get what you need = A *meeting with the staffer who handles your issue*. Don’t be disappointed if you can’t meet with the member directly; you want to build a positive relationship with the relevant staffer because then you can call or e-mail him/her when timely events happen, like before a vote goes to the floor! Often, a meeting with a staffer can be just as (or even more) productive as a meeting with a member.

### 4. Contact Information

_Note:_ Members of Congress often have more than one office in Oregon. Some member’s offices are in Federal buildings. These buildings require security checks and photo IDs. Allow for extra time to get through security. “Best Contact” info may or may not be current, but it is a good place to start.

**Representative Bonamici – 1st District**

Portland Office
12725 SW Millikan Way #220, Beaverton, OR 97005
(503) 469-6010

Best Contacts: Joyce Fleming, (503) 469-6010, joyce.fleming@mail.house.gov
Brian Plinski: brian.plinski@mail.house.gov

**Representative Walden – 2nd District**

Southern Oregon Office:
14 N. Central Ave, Suite 112, Medford, OR 97501
541-776-4646

Central Oregon Office:
1051 NW Bond St., Suite 400, Bend, OR 97701
541-389-4408

**Representative Blumenauer – 3rd District**

911 NE 11th Ave, Suite 200, Portland, OR 97232
(503) 231-2300

Best Contacts: Roberto Gutierrez, roberto.gutierrez@mail.house.gov

**Representative DeFazio – 4th District**

Eugene Office
405 East 8th Ave. #2030, Eugene, OR 97401
(541) 465-6732

**Representative Schrader – 5th District**

Salem District Office (Primary office)
530 Center St. NE, Suite 415, Salem, OR 97301
Phone: (503) 588-9100

Oregon City District Office
621 High Street
SAMPLE LETTER

Date

The Honorable [First and Last name]
United States [House of Representatives/Senate]
Address
ATTN: Scheduler

Dear [Rep/Senator] [Last Name],

My name is ____ and I am contacting you on behalf of (your community / or the Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice). We are a community/coalition of people of faith and conscience working for the justice and dignity of immigrants here in the state of Oregon (or your community).

We would like to schedule a meeting with you during the August Work Period to discuss the work that we do, the communities we work with, and the issues we are addressing. We would appreciate 30 minutes of your time.

Along with myself, there will be three others who would like to meet with you for this conversation. We will provide their names when we have our meeting scheduled.

We realize your time constraints, so we would be willing to accommodate a meeting with you at any point during the August recess at your district office in [location]. If it is not possible to meet with you, we would appreciate a meeting with your legislative assistant who works on immigrant and refugee rights.

Please let me know if you have any questions. The best way to reach me is either by e-mail [xxx@xxx.com] or on my phone [123-123-1234].

Sincerely,

[Your Name] / [Your Address] / [Your Phone] / [Your Email]