



Guide to Congress



Dear CDA Member:

Working with your federal elected officials can be daunting, but with a little guidance it can be a rewarding experience. Understanding who your elected representatives are, what role they play, who the leaders are, and who has jurisdiction over issues of importance to the convenience distribution industry will give you confidence in your engagement with Members of Congress and their staff. Direct advocacy by CDA members is an important part of our Government Relations programming, and we are happy to provide you with advocacy tools to ensure a successful meeting with your Members of Congress and/or their legislative staff.

Members of Congress and their staff want to understand the impact of federal legislation on the convenience distribution industry. This tool kit will guide you through a Congressional visit and provide tips for success during and after your meeting, including ways to enhance the content of your message. The CDA *Guide to Congress* is intended to provide you with an overview of key Members of Congress and a roadmap for engaging with your elected officials. As always, CDA staff stands ready to assist you in any way.

Sincerely,



Kimberly Bolin
President & CEO

Meeting with a Member of Congress

Thank you for your interest in lobbying on behalf of the Convenience Distribution Association. This guide will help you as you engage with elected officials at every level. CDA is happy to assist and participate in any Hill meetings on behalf of the convenience distribution industry. For our annual Day on the Hill, CDA will schedule and make all of the preparations for your meetings.

Steps for Setting Up the Meeting

1. Identify your Member of Congress. There are 100 Senators and 435 members of the House of Representatives. Each state has two Senators, and the number of House members per state is determined by population. To identify your Representative, visit www.house.gov and enter your zip code at the top right. To identify your Senators, visit www.senate.gov.
2. Call your legislator's office and ask to speak with the Scheduler. Generally, this request is most effective if done at least one month in advance. Most offices require that you send a "Meeting Request" via email to the Scheduler. If that is the case, the office will provide you with the individual's name and email address.
3. Put "Meeting Request" and a specific date in the subject field of your email. In the body of your email, include:
 - Times when you are available to meet. While the exact date of your visit to Capitol Hill may be set, the more meeting times you provide, the more likely you will get a meeting with the Member of Congress. Be flexible with your schedule.
 - The exact number of people who will attend and their names, titles, and hometowns.
 - A brief synopsis of the issues you would like to discuss, limited to three topics. Include any materials that support your position.
4. If you do not hear back within a couple of days, resubmit your request and state that you are just following up regarding your meeting request. Don't be too aggressive.

Prior to Your Meeting

1. Find out whether your legislator is on a committee of particular relevance to CDA through www.house.gov, www.senate.gov, or email scampagna@capitoldecisions.com.
2. Familiarize yourself with the biography provided on the Member's website, and note any connections you may have in common—high school, college, military, etc. A personal connection is invaluable.
3. Familiarize yourself with the Member's position on issues of relevance to CDA. You can email scampagna@capitoldecisions.com for this information. When you are making visits as part of CDA's Day on the Hill, this information will be provided for you.

During Your Meeting

1. Prepare a brief one- to two-minute introduction of yourself and your group. Talk about the history of your company, number of employees, and your connection to the community.
2. Start on positive note by finding some common ground, whether a personal connection, mutual friend, recent news from your hometown, or a legislative issue that the Member has supported.

Glossary of Terms

Ask. The request we make of a Member of Congress to introduce a bill or amendment, cosponsor a bill, take a vote, sign a letter, or take another action on our behalf.

Caucus. A group of members interested in a particular issue. There is a caucus for almost every conceivable issue.

Chairman. The leader of a committee, always from the majority party.

Chairman's mark. The initial draft of legislation proffered by the chairman of a committee, usually the starting point for debate in the committee.

Chief of staff. Runs the office and is the Member's top political advisor.

Committee/subcommittee. An issue area focused group or subgroup of Congress used to create policy.

Communications director (also known as press secretary). Responds to requests from media; often manages social media accounts of the Member of Congress.

The Hill. Shorthand for Capitol Hill—both the physical location and collective term for Congress and staff.

Legislative assistant. Specializes in specific issues, monitoring bills and committee meetings in those areas; drafts floor statements and responses to constituent mail.

Legislative correspondent. Answers all constituent communications; drafts routine responses.

Legislative director. Plans legislative initiatives and strategies; supervises other legislative staff.

Majority Leader. In the Senate, the head of the majority party.

Mark up. The committee process by which a bill is modified before it goes to the full House or Senate.

Member. Any Senator or Representative.

One pager/leave behind. Material provided by CDA for a meeting on the Hill which explains our position and provides background on an issue, and is left with Congressional staff for their use and reference.

Ranking member. On a committee, the senior ranking member of the minority party.

Scheduler. Manages official schedule of the member of Congress, fielding meeting requests in coordination with the Congressional schedule and time spent in the Member's congressional district.

Score. The amount of money passage of a bill will cost the U.S. Treasury, usually provided by the Congressional Budget Office or Joint Committee on Taxation.

Speaker of the House. In the House, the head of the majority party.

Staff assistant. Answers phones and greets visitors to the office.

Staffer. Any staff member of a Member of Congress or a Congressional committee—from the most senior to the most junior.

State/district director. Heads home state offices; political liaison to local community.

3. Your meeting will last only 15–20 minutes, so avoid being distracted with non-essential conversation. Provide a brief overview of the issues you want to discuss and your position (maximum three). Keep the conversation simple and polite. Avoid overloading the legislator or staff with too much information. While they are educated on most issues, they are typically “generalists” except for specific issues within the jurisdiction of their committee assignment.
4. When discussing specific topics, explain a position with facts and then use personal anecdotes to explain why the issue needs action. Make sure the legislator understands the benefits or negative ramifications of their actions and how they will impact your business.
5. Be positive and avoid partisanship. It is extremely inappropriate to discuss political contributions, whether personal or from the CDA PAC. Also, it is illegal to give your elected official a campaign contribution on federal property, in their official Congressional office in Washington or in their district office.
6. Ask the legislator to take a specific action, such as co-sponsoring a bill or voting for or against a pending measure. If a legislator agrees to support an issue (i.e. co-sponsor a bill or vote in favor of the bill), say “thank you” and move on to the next issue.
7. Show openness to counterarguments and politely respond if it seems appropriate to do so. If you disagree, avoid being argumentative.
8. If the answer to a question from a legislator or staffer is not known to you, it is okay to say so. Simply reply that you are not sure of the answer, offer to get an answer, and follow up as soon as possible with the answer. This actually provides a good opportunity to keep the conversation going after you have returned home.
9. If you are unable to meet with your Member of Congress, do not underestimate the influence of their staff. While they may be young (the average age of a Congressional staffer is 27), they are educated, well informed, and provide direction to their boss’s decision-making process. They are often from the same Congressional district and you may have connections to them as well.
10. If there is time, it is appropriate to ask the legislator for a photo. If you use Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram, post your picture with a positive comment, including CDA’s Twitter handle (@CDA_01) and your legislator’s (which their staff can provide) so they see your positive feedback and can share your post with other constituents. Send the photo to Alex Swaim at CDA (alexs@cdaweb.net) as soon as possible for posting to the CDA Social Media platforms.
11. When leaving, thank them for their time and get a business card for the staffer you met with or accompanied the legislator.

Meeting Logistics

1. Be prepared to meet in spaces other than the legislator’s office—possibly the hallway while walking to another meeting, the cafeteria, or a Committee Hearing Room anteroom. Offices are small and staffers will usually try to get you time with the Member even if it is “on the fly.”
2. Bring business cards and offer your cell phone number to the legislator or staff. Ultimately, you want to build this relationship, so provide a direct contact number.

“The feeling is that it’s intimidating to speak to a legislator, but I’ve learned that it’s really not—it’s what you need to do, especially in our industry.”

—Jeff Allen, Allen Brothers Wholesale Distributors, Inc.

3. If you get lost, ask a Capitol Hill police officer for directions. They are very helpful.
4. Allow time for long security screening lines at building entrances. Wear comfortable shoes and leave metal objects (change, keys) at your hotel.
5. If you are running late or must cancel your meeting, call the legislator's office and let them know as soon as possible.

After Your Meeting

1. Write a thank you letter or email summarizing your visit. Thank the Member of Congress for their support on your issues. Most importantly, if there was a certain bill they agreed to co-sponsor or vote for, remind them of that bill.



2. Maintain ongoing communication with the legislator and their staff through letters, emails, or calls. Offer to serve as a resource to them on issues impacting your industry.
3. Find out when the legislator will be back in the district and offer to host a visit to your warehouse or office (see the *CDA Guide to Site Visits* below for tips on a successful tour and meeting).
4. Keep the CDA staff informed about your advocacy efforts and activities. The DC office can follow up with your legislators, which helps build our relationships as well as yours.



“Sitting down face-to-face helps to create the relationships that will prove to be helpful in the future. When issues arise, if you haven't already made contact, it's too late.”

—Butch DiChiara, City Wholesale Grocery Co.

Tips for an Effective Meeting

Elected officials want to be helpful. As a member of your local business community, your elected officials will be interested in what you care about. If you follow the above tips, you will ensure a productive visit and be well on your way to establishing a good working relationship into the future.

▶ DOs

- Do thank the legislator/staffer for taking time to meet with you.
- Do thank them for considering your viewpoint.
- Do expect them to be responsive to your views.
- Do stick to an agenda.
- Do keep it simple and brief.
- Do be forthright and informative.
- Do provide an “Ask.” Tell them what you would like for them to do.
- Do provide a persuasive argument.
- Do cite specific issues and data and use personal anecdotes.
- Do let them know why you care about the issue personally.
- Do explain how the issue affects your business.
- Do offer to provide additional background information on the subject.
- Do offer to assist the staff in any way possible.
- Do take a picture and share it on social media, tagging the legislator so they can also share it.

▶ DON'Ts

- Don't be narrowly ideological.
- Don't be argumentative or confrontational.
- Don't be close-minded.
- Don't lose track of time. Be respectful of how busy legislators and their staff are.
- Don't expect your Member of Congress to drop everything and focus solely on your concerns.
- Don't threaten your legislator (e.g., “If you don't vote for this bill, I won't vote for you in your next election.”).
- Don't talk about campaign contributions.



CDA Guide to Site Visits

Hosting elected officials in your warehouse and/or office is an invaluable tool for promoting the convenience distribution industry and developing relationships with stakeholders.

When you invite a Member of Congress or other elected official to your site, you can demonstrate how your business impacts the local economy, the breadth of your business, and how the legislator's actions in Washington have a direct impact on your business. CDA staff stands ready to assist you in every phase of a site visit.

Extend the Invitation

1. Send an invitation in writing via email to the elected official's scheduler. Also include the district director.

Prepare for the Visit

1. If needed, do a little spring cleaning to make sure your facility is in top form.
2. Notify all employees of the date and time of the visit. Consider identifying a few employees ahead of time to engage with the official during their visit or tour.
3. Create signage welcoming your guest.
4. Educate yourself on the biography and positions of the official.



On the Day of the Visit

1. Greet your guest at the door and welcome them into your facility.
2. Introduce your guest to employees, who are likely also the guest's constituents.
3. Be sure to highlight those employees who have been with your company for 10, 15, 20 years and more. Employees can talk about their quality jobs and benefits.
4. Discuss your business:
 - Commercial value—how you help a variety of products get to market.
 - Economic value—the great jobs you provide and the tax revenue you help generate.
 - Regulatory value—your role in selling highly-regulated product such as tobacco and your role in collecting taxes.
5. Tell Members of Congress when you'll be in Washington, DC. Share the dates of CDA's Day on the Hill and let them know you look forward to seeing them.
6. Take photos that can be shared on social media and with CDA.

After the Visit

1. Send a personal thank-you note to your guest.
2. Thank the guest on social media and tag them in your post.
3. Connect with their staff regarding outstanding issues or any follow-up that is required.
4. Share the details and photos of the visit with CDA staff.

"It's important that lawmakers . . . hear directly from us about our businesses in their districts and states. They need to know how the laws and regulations they are considering impact our businesses in their states. If we don't tell them, who will?"

—Charlie Casper, Mydad Inc. dba Hardec's



Committees and Their Jurisdictions

Congressional committees help to organize the most important work of Congress—considering, shaping, and passing laws to govern the nation. The policy work of the House and Senate is delegated to a number of committees who have jurisdiction over issue areas. Committees are chaired by a member of the majority party, and the majority party has the benefit of more members assigned to each committee. *Elections have consequences.*

The committees with the most relevant jurisdiction over issues of importance to CDA members are:

House of Representatives

Energy and Commerce

Ways and Means

Appropriations

Senate

Health, Education, Labor and Pensions

Finance

Appropriations



CDA

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