Scheduling In-District Congressional Meetings

Nothing replaces direct interaction between a constituent and their member of Congress when attempting to influence policy. Constituent meetings help members of Congress get a crucial sense of constituent priorities and helps make the issues in question a priority. As a physician constituent, your member of Congress wants to meet with you.

Mechanics of Scheduling a District Meeting, Virtual Meeting or Site Visit:

1) Contact the district office or appropriate scheduler, looping in the District Director if needed.
2) Be very clear on your ask and make it compelling – relay what is in it for the member (exposure, contact with influential voters and potential supporters, optics of working with physicians, etc.)
3) First priority should be an in-person meeting with the member, but limitations attributable to the COVID-19 pandemic are likely, therefore virtual Zoom meetings or a site visit are potential alternatives.
4) Be firm that you want to meet with the member of Congress rather than staff.
5) If in-person meetings at a district office are not possible, offer to host the member via Zoom.
6) If considering a site visit at a physician office, make the option compelling by emphasizing the importance of seeing the community. Think about effective optics – wearing scrubs, white coats, equipment and patients.
7) Have a specific goal for the meeting.
8) Be flexible, the schedules of members of Congress are very hectic.
9) Once scheduled, get the cell number and name of your contact for last-minute communications.

Preparing for Meeting/Messaging:

1) Do your homework – read background material from the AAOS Office of Government Relations, the member’s biography and look up the staff on LinkedIn.
2) Make sure the messaging is simple and consistent, tell personal stories (they are more likely to remember this) and practice, practice, practice.
3) Be positive, humanize, connect, personalize, find commonalities – this is about relationship building.
4) Deliver the key message in the first 5 minutes.
5) Make sure to relate the issue to the impact on the district or state – why the member should care.
6) Always have a clear ask.
7) Take photos, post to Twitter, tag the member of Congress and @AAOSAdvocacy!
8) Follow-up – remember that this is long-term relationship building.