

## Neighbor-to-Neighbor In-District Meetings

Establishing close relationships with your members of congress is crucial to enacting humane immigration reform.

### **Purpose of Neighbor to Neighbor In-District Meetings:**

1. To understand where the member stands on the issue.
2. To understand that member's interests.
3. To (hopefully) get a commitment of support for our issue.
4. To build relationships between our people and public officials and institutions influencing our community.
5. To train ourselves to "act" in public arenas.

Because the process of change takes time, lobby visits should be viewed as a part of a larger process. We need to gather information, build power, and continually get better at what we do and how we do it.

B e f o r e   y o u   m e e t   w i t h   a   M e m b e r

### **Have a plan**

Before you enter into a lobby visit *always* meet before hand and assign roles! Roles should include who will *credential* the group, who will take lead on each issue, who will make *the ask* and who will jump in if someone decides to lobby on an issue the group had not agreed to upfront.

### **The Credential**

This is who you are and *who you represent!* You are more than 'a constituent'. You are a constituent who represents other constituents back home and you'll report back to them. Remember, politicians pay attention to numbers.

### **The Team Work**

It is important to follow the plan you set during the pre-meeting. Of course you'll need to be flexible

### **The Ask**

Why just tell them what you want – Ask if they'll support you! "Can we count on the Senator's support on this measure?" Listen carefully and ask for clarification if what they say is vague.

### **The Debrief**

It's important to make sure we're on the same page leaving the meeting. As a group, review: What did we hear? Did we get what we wanted? What are the next steps? And it's important to help us get better to evaluate the group. How did we do? As a team? As individuals?

Follow these easy steps to ensure your visit impacts how they will vote on immigration issues:

- 1.) **Find out who represents you in Congress.** Go to [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) and [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) to find out who your Senators and Representatives are.
- 2.) **Know your audience.** Find out how your Senators and Representative vote on immigration. Their websites and a “Google” search will show how they vote and what they have said about immigration.
- 3.) **Schedule a meeting.** Call, email or fax the local offices of your Senators and Representatives to request a meeting. If the member is unavailable, ask to meet with a staffer who works on immigration issues.
- 4.) **Tell your story.** You’re a constituent, and therefore your Senators and Representatives care about what you think. Tell them why you care about immigration policies; how they impact your community and those you care about. Your story is the most important part of the visit.
- 5.) **Bring facts.** Support your opinion with fact sheets provided by the Interfaith Immigration Coalition calling for immigration reform that unites families, respects the rights of all workers, and provides a pathway for undocumented immigrants to earn their legal status.
- 6.) **Ask for support and leadership.** Ask what their position is on immigration reform is and how they will champion reform by introducing and supporting humane and equitable legislation. Even if they don’t agree with everything you discuss, ask how they will champion the pieces that they do agree with.
- 7.) **Follow up.** Send the staff you meet with an email thanking them for their time, attaching any documents you mentioned, answering any questions that you were unable to answer during the meeting, and once again making your case for humane and equitable immigration reform.
- 8.) **Call Washington, DC.** The Capitol Switchboard (202) 224-3121 can connect you to the DC offices of your Senators and Representatives. Introduce yourself as a constituent and ask for the staffer who works on immigration. Tell them about your meeting with their local office, ask what they are doing to champion immigration reform, and urge them to support humane immigration policies.
- 9.) **Build a relationship.** Call these local and DC staff persons once a week to discuss immigration issues and how your Senator or Representative is voting on the issue. Let them know about events that show your community cares about immigrants and legislation you would like them to support.
- 10.) **Connect with advocates in Washington, DC.** After you meet or speak with someone from your Senators’ and Representatives’ offices, fill out the Report Back Form that will be sent shortly and send that to Yvette Schock at [yschock@umc-gbcs.org](mailto:yschock@umc-gbcs.org). The DC advocates will then follow up with the staff members in DC as the time for making funding decisions draws closer.
- 11.) **Get others involved!** Get a group of friends to visit the local office of your Senators and Representatives about immigration issues. You can even write a letter to your local newspaper or call your local radio station about these issues.