

# HOW TO HOST A LEGISLATOR

Hosting a legislator for a site visit is one of the most effective ways to influence policy decisions and build long-lasting political relationships. These visits, which involve minimal planning, offer quality face-to-face time with elected officials and allow you to showcase your business and tell your story.

When a legislator pays a visit to your business, you are building a personal relationship with that legislator – a relationship that can lead to access and influence. When, for instance, a Congressman is deliberating over a particular issue, 100 identical form letters from random individuals will not be as powerful as a phone call from a trusted confidant back in the district.

Close, personal relationships are what continue to move the needle in both Washington, D.C. and the state capitals.

## **STEP 1 Plan an event, fundraiser, tour, or meeting.**

Prepare an event that encourages interaction between your legislator and your group. Expect a quick visit, but provide ample opportunity and a window for the legislator to attend.

## **STEP 2 Call the local legislator's office.**

Call the office to determine the scheduling process for that particular office. Let them know you are a constituent and would like to set up a meeting. There might be an official process required for meeting requests, so take notes and be prepared.

## **STEP 3 Send an official invite.**

Send an official letter with all of the main details including your contact information, others attending the event, business, reason for the event, desired location, desired date & time.

## **STEP 4 Host the legislator.**

Have a great event! Take photos, ask questions, have a comfortable conversation about what matters. Keep it to the facts, and make your points concise. They will likely only remember a few details so make sure those are your key topics.

## **STEP 5 Send a thank you letter.**

Send a letter after the event thanking the Legislator for attending. Use this as another opportunity to summarize your talking points, but also show how much you appreciate them taking the time to be there.

Resources are available at AutoCare to assist you.

**Hailey Ray**

Director of Political Affairs

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## **SCHEDULING AN IN-DISTRICT MEETING WITH YOUR LEGISLATOR**

The following is a step-by-step process for scheduling a meeting with your elected official's district or state office.

Please note that each office handles meeting requests differently. This document provides a general guide of the steps you'll need to follow in order to properly set up an official meeting.

Also note that most offices schedule these meetings anywhere from one to three weeks out (longer if meeting is a site visit), so account for that timeframe when planning.

### **I. Call the office and identify the scheduling process.**

Call your legislator's main district office during normal business hours (if contact number is not already provided, please email [david.pinkham@autocare.org](mailto:david.pinkham@autocare.org) for most up-to-date information). Say that you are a constituent and would like to see about setting up a meeting (e.g., site visit or meeting at district office). The scheduler (or their voicemail) will explain the official process as to how the office receives meeting requests and sets up district appointments, so listen carefully.

### **II. Provide the necessary information in the request.**

- Your name and contact information
- The name of others attending the meeting
- The name of the business/association you are representing
- The reason for the appointment (e.g., to discuss your business, specific issue, etc.)
- Desired location (be flexible)
- Desired date and time (be flexible)

### **III. Follow up to confirm the request was received.**

If you do not receive a response within two to three days, call the scheduler to confirm that the request was received. If the office is still weighing your request, feel free to establish a time as to when you would like to receive a response.

### **IV. Prepare.**

Please notify David Pinkham at [david.pinkham@autocare.org](mailto:david.pinkham@autocare.org) once you have an appointment scheduled. He will be able to offer any additional intelligence on the legislator and provide any materials for you to review and bring to the meeting. Take time to review the legislator's website and social media pages to better understand their background and the issues most important to them.

If you're traveling to the legislator's district office, plan to arrive 5-10 minutes early. Remember to dress appropriately and bring business cards.

Finally, if you are meeting with a legislative staffer, they speak for and represent the interests of the legislator, so the preparation process remains the same.



## [SAMPLE SITE VISIT INVITATION]

This is a sample letter for you to use when inviting your member of Congress to visit your place of business. Please make sure any instructional information is deleted and all blank areas are filled in before sending. Feel free to copy/paste onto your own company's letterhead.

The Honorable [First Name] [Last Name]  
U.S. [House of Representatives or Senate]  
[District Office Address Line 1]  
[District Office City], [District Office State] [District Office Zip]

Dear [Representative or Senator] [Last Name],

As a constituent and member of the Auto Care Association, I would like to invite you to visit with me at **[NAME OF COMPANY]** in **[CITY]** during the week of **[PREFERRED WEEK]**.

I am **[YOUR JOB TITLE]** of **[NAME OF COMPANY]** and will be your host for the meeting, but **[NAMES/TITLES OF OTHERS ATTENDING]** will be in attendance as well.

My business is a member of the auto care industry, which is comprised of 500,000 businesses that form a coast-to-coast network of independent manufacturers, distributors, repair shops, marketers and retailers small and large. We provide quality parts, products and vehicle service and repair for all 260 million cars and trucks on the road in America today.

I would appreciate the opportunity to speak with you about my business and how it fits into the auto care industry supply chain.

Please contact me directly to confirm a date and time for our meeting. I can be reached at **(PHONE NUMBER)** or by email at **(EMAIL)**.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]  
[Your Company's Name]  
[Your Address – **SHOULD BE LOCATED IN THE DISTRICT**]  
[Your Phone Number]  
[Your Email Address]



## DOS AND DON'T'S WHEN MEETING WITH A LEGISLATOR

### DO:

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- **Prepare.** Check out the elected official's website and social media pages to get an idea of the issues important to them and their office. Arrive early, dress appropriately and bring business cards.
- **Inform.** Inform Auto Care Association staff that you have a meeting scheduled; they will help provide any key talking points and our combined efforts will have a stronger impact.
- **Be Flexible.** Legislators are busy, even when back home in the district or state, so it is important to try to accommodate the office's schedule as much as possible.
- **Be the Expert.** You are the expert on your business and how the government may impact your ability to succeed. Share your personal experiences and insights.
- **Listen.** Participate in active listening. The legislator or staff member might have an idea of how something might be able to move through Congress that you can pass along, or if they don't agree with your position on an issue, they will often tell you why.
- **Relax.** No need to be nervous. Remember, you are there to discuss your business and your story. Plus, they want to hear from you. If you don't know an answer to a question it is okay to say "I will need to get back to you."
- **Follow Up.** Send a follow-up letter after your meeting to thank the elected official and/or staff for the meeting and to respond to any questions that were not answered during the meeting.

### DON'T:

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- **Get Political.** Your meeting is about constituent services and public policy; it is not about campaign support, financial contributions or electoral politics. Discussion of these items can lead to ethical and legal troubles for any elected official. If you are a major campaign donor, chances are they already know—there is no need to bring it up.
- **Assume.** It is important to share your story, but don't assume you know the elected official's views on a particular issue. Ask them and listen to their response.
- **Talk About the Weather.** Don't get bogged down in small talk. These meetings can be brief so be sure to focus on the policy issues that are important to your company.



## [SAMPLE THANK YOU LETTER – LEGISLATOR]

This is a sample thank you letter for you to send to your legislator after your meeting. Please make sure any instructional information is deleted and all blank areas are filled in before sending. Feel free to copy/paste onto your own company's letterhead. Be sure to personalize your note based on what you discussed at your meeting.

The Honorable [First Name] [Last Name]  
U.S. [House of Representatives / Senate]  
[District Office Address Line 1]  
[District Office City], [District Office State] [District Office Zip]

Dear [Representative / Senator] [Last Name],

Thank you for visiting **[NAME OF BUSINESS]** on **[DATE]**. I hope we were able to sufficiently explain our interests and demonstrate our strong economic impact on the region.

As I mentioned during the meeting, **[NAME OF BUSINESS]** has taken positions on the following key issues:

- **[LIST ANY ISSUES DISCUSSED HERE + OUR POSITION]**
- ...

Once again, thank you for taking the time to visit with us. I look forward to speaking with you again in the future and please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]  
[Your Company's Name]  
[Your Address – SHOULD BE LOCATED IN THE DISTRICT]  
[Your Phone Number]  
[Your Email Address]