**BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER A MEETING WITH A CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE**

**& Letter Writing Campaign Tips**

**Before a Meeting with a Congressional Office**

**Scheduling the Meeting**

**How to Identify the Best E-Mail Contact to Request a Meeting:**

* Begin by reaching out to the scheduler in each office.  An email template for reaching out to the Congressional office is below.
* You can find the scheduler’s name using the USCCB’s [Action Center](https://www.votervoice.net/USCCB/address) (click on the name of your member of Congress, then open the “Staff” tab).
* Senate staff email addresses are usually formatted as First\_Last@Senatorlastname.senate.gov (e.g., John\_Doe@Smith.senate.gov).
* House staff email addresses are usually formatted as First.Last@mail.house.gov (e.g., John.Doe@mail.house.gov).
* **Wait 5 business days** after your initial request for a response. If you are unsuccessful in contacting the scheduler, you should reach out to the legislative director, copying the scheduler, with the same request, mentioning the date you originally sent your request. You can find the name of the legislative director in the [Action Center](https://www.votervoice.net/USCCB/address), using the same process outlined above.
* If you hear back from neither the scheduler nor the legislative director, call the main office number for the member of Congress and tell them you are trying to schedule a meeting with your member of Congress or a staff member.
* If the member of Congress is not available to meet, ask for a meeting with the legislative director (LD) or a legislative assistant (LA) that covers one of the issues you will be discussing.  Note: It is sometimes more productive to meet with the staff member who knows more about the specifics of the bills than the member of Congress.

**Once Meeting Is Scheduled and 1-2 Days Before Meeting**

* Send reminder email that also includes Leave Behind (also known background information) that will be provided for you.

**During the Meeting with the Congressional Office**

* Follow the outline below for a meeting with a Congressional Office.
* While, it tempting to bring up other issues that are important to you, stick to the two designated issues for effectiveness.
* Be polite at all times. Remember, besides the actual issues being addressed, the long term relationship of trust with the Congressional office is the most important purpose of the meeting.
* If the member of Congress leads the conversation off topic, gently tell them that you want to respect the limited time you have and stick to the two topics for which you came to discuss.

**After the Visit with the Congressional Office**

* **Send a thank you email** to the staff you met with in each member’s office.
  + Include the leave behind packet again in this email.
  + A template email is available at the end of this document.
* Optional: Consider creating a press release and send it to the media.
* Optional: Consider blogging, tweeting, or using other social media to share information about your meeting and reiterate your message.
* Complete the Congressional Visit Report form found [here.](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe3EmqAl6WpCzq91tJvuFtc0HI8kpbC6ogO9qiczKB8AefOUA/viewform?usp=sf_link)

Letter-Writing Campaign Tips

1. Choose the setting in which you will invite people to write letters. It could be a CCW meeting at the parish, vicariate, diocesan or province level. It could also be for entire parishes in which the CCW asks parishioners to take 3 minutes after Mass to write a letter to Congress.
2. Using the provided background and “leave-behind” information, educate your group and/or parish ahead of time about these two issues. Be sure that these are issues that were chosen and vetted by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops to be in line with our Catholic teaching.
3. Provide provided samples of letters but encourage people to change some of the wording to be there own, including why these issues are important to them.
4. Provide the name and Washington address of your member of Congress.
5. Provide paper and envelopes. If people have unused stationery or cards laying around, these can create a nice variety of options on which people can write their letters. Asking people to bring these from home can be a good way of creating interest. Also, standard 8 ½ x11 paper and business envelopes are an option.
6. Due to the “out of mind—out is sight” reality, encourage people to write and address their letters on the spot. However, some will want to write their letters at home.
7. Stamp and mail each letter. You might consider a basket where people can give a donation to help pay for postage.
8. Complete the “Offering of Letters” report [here](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScEZKQgiS8tMnPWxShlMTlmQcKPtjrKCT_-BA-Wh4xmgEg9XA/viewform?usp=sf_link) letting us know how many letters were sent to Congress.

**TEMPLATE EMAILS TO CONGRESSIONAL OFFICES**

**MEETING REQUEST EMAIL**

TO:  Scheduler

SUBJECT: Council of Catholic Women Meeting Request

Good Morning/Afternoon/Evening,

I am from the Diocese/Archdiocese of XXX and a constituent of Senator/Representative XXX. I am the XXX province director or other role for the National Council of Catholic Women. I am responsible for organizing visits between Senator/Representative \_\_\_\_\_ and his/her constituents who are members of the National Council of Catholic Women.

Members of the Council of Catholic Women from all over the country are meeting with congressional offices to discuss legislative issues that are important to us. Women in my state/district would welcome an opportunity to meet in person or by zoom with Senator/Representative XXX, or staff if s/he’s unavailable. We hope to discuss the following issues:

* Supporting hungry and vulnerable people with robust international humanitarian relief and development assistance.
* Passing legislation providing Afghan humanitarian parolees in the United States with a pathway to permanent legal status, such as the bipartisan Afghan Adjustment Act (S. 4787/H.R. 8685) introduced during the 117th Congress.

**Would** Senator/Representative XXX **be available for an in-person or zoom meeting during (name a range of dates).**

Thank you for your assistance with this request. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need any additional information.

Best,

Name

Email Address

Phone Number

**CONFIRMATION EMAIL (to be sent as soon as you set a meeting time)**

*If possible, reply to your earlier messages so all your communications can be seen in one email thread.*

TO: staff member(s) you’ll be meeting with

CC: scheduler

SUBJECT: Council of Catholic Women Meeting Day and Time , Sen./Rep. XXX

ATTACHMENTS: Invitation to Hill Reception; and (if available) Leave-Behind Document (also known as Background Document)

Hello Staff Person,

Thank you for your willingness to meet with representatives of our Council of Catholic Women in state or Congressional district XXX to discuss:

* Supporting hungry and vulnerable people with robust international humanitarian relief and development assistance.
* Passing legislation providing Afghan humanitarian parolees in the United States with a pathway to permanent legal status, such as the bipartisan Afghan Adjustment Act (S. 4787/H.R. 8685) introduced during the 117th Congress.

Please find attached briefing documents that outline our policy requests.

**This is a confirmation of our meeting time of** \_\_\_AM/PM **on day XXX** in person/via zoom**.**

[IF VIA ZOOM:]

The zoom details for the meeting can be found here:

Zoom link

Meeting ID

Password

Dial-in #

In case of any issues, please contact me at this email address or by phone at XXX.

Sincerely,

Name

Email Address

Phone Number

**FINAL CONFIRMATION EMAIL (to be sent within 1-3 days of your meeting)**

*If possible, reply to your earlier messages so all your communications can be seen in one email thread.*

TO: staff member(s) you’ll be meeting with

CC: scheduler

SUBJECT: Council of Catholic Women meeting on day and Time

ATTACHMENTS: Leave-Behind Document (also known as Leave Behind Document)

Dear Staff Person,

The Council of Catholic Women from state or district is looking forward to meeting with Senator/Representative/staff first and last name on day at Time. I have attached the background documents for your review.

In case of any issues, please contact me at this email address or by phone at XXX.

Sincerely,

Name

Email Address

Phone Number

**Congressional Office Meeting Worksheet**

Use this worksheet to outline the roles and flow of your congressional meeting. Please note that the same person may fulfill multiple roles. You may also want to identify back-ups for various roles if you are participating in a virtual meeting, in case there are technical issues.

**Overarching Roles**

**Facilitator: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

Keeps the meeting moving by introducing each new speaker and facilitating conversation.

**Timekeeper:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

Ensures the group adheres to the allotted time. Meetings are typically 15-30 minutes.

**Notetaker:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

Notes any reactions, questions, and follow-up requests from the meeting. Meetings are typically 15-30 minutes.

**Meeting Outline**

Introductions

Point Person\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Someone should

* Thank the member of staff for the meeting and for something the member has done recently,
* Confirm time allotment for the meeting
* Introduce the National Council of Catholic Women and your province/diocese
* Invite everyone with speaking roles to introduce themselves (each person should give their name and the city in which they live and note that he or she is a constituent, and
* Invite the person with whom you’re meeting to introduce themselves and indicate what portfolio they handle with the Congressional office. You might also invite them to **briefly** tell you the path that led them to their position. This is important to know as you work to establish a long term relationship with them,

Summarize each of the two issues at hand.

**Pathway to Legal Status for Our Afghani Neighbors**

Point Person to Introduce the Issue and Make the Request\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Personal Story Point Person\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Share why this issue is compelling to you, using a story to illustrate your point, but keep it short.

Discussion: Point person on this discussion:

* What are their/their boss’ policy priorities? Try to tie these into your ask.
* Where do they/their boss stand on this issue?
* What do they see as the challenges in making this ask a reality?
* How can you support them to make this ask a reality?

**Increase Poverty-Reducing International Humanitarian and Development Assistance**

Point Person to Introduce the Issue and Make the Request\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Personal Story Point Person\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Share why this issue is compelling to you, using a story to illustrate your point, but keep it short.

Discussion: Point person on this discussion:

* What are their/their boss’ policy priorities? Try to tie these into your ask.
* Where do they/their boss stand on this issue?
* What do they see as the challenges in making this ask a reality?
* How can you support them to make this ask a reality?

Wrap Up/Conclusion

Reiterate your ask, establish next steps, including when you can call back to follow up, and express your gratitude for their time and attention.

**THANK YOU EMAIL (to be sent soon after your meeting)**

*If possible, reply to your earlier messages so all your communications can be seen in one email thread.*

TO: staff member(s) you met with

SUBJECT: Council of Catholic Women Thank You and Follow-Up

ATTACHMENTS: Leave-Behind Document

Dear Staff Person,

Thank you for taking the time to speak with us about our Catholic priorities. As your constituents, we appreciated being able to connect with you.

To work together towards greater justice for all, we urge Senator/Representative XXX to:

* Support hungry and vulnerable people with robust international humanitarian relief and development assistance.
* Pass legislation providing Afghan humanitarian parolees in the United States with a pathway to permanent legal status, such as the bipartisan Afghan Adjustment Act (S. 4787/H.R. 8685) introduced during the 117th Congress.

If any commitments were made, summarize them here, e.g., a commitment from the member to take any sort of action in support of the request, a commitment by the member to visit your program, or an agreement that you made to follow up with his/her office at a particular time.

If you promised follow-up to a specific question(s) during your visit, you should include that information here or state the name and contact information of the person who will be following up with them (ask the advocacy committee for this information).

We look forward to working with you on these critical issues in Congress as Catholic organizations are on the ground conducting programs to help those in need. If there is anything we can do to support Rep./ Sen. XXX’s efforts in these areas, please let us know. Thank you again for your time and please do not hesitate to reach out should you have any questions.

For additional information, please also feel free to reach out to:

* Lauren McCormack, Executive Director of Government Relations, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops at LMcCormack@usccb.org for questions related to the Child Tax Credit or international assistance.
* Michael Hill, Associate Director of Government Relations, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops at MHill@usccb.org for questions related to legal status for Afghan humanitarian parolees.

Sincerely,

Your Name

(You can also choose to list the name and city of everyone in your delegation)