



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

ELCA Advocacy in your state: **In-district meetings with Congress**

Elected officials in Congress regularly return to their home districts to stay engaged with their constituents. While they are home, there are multiple ways you can engage your elected officials in your policy issues.

SCHEDULING AN IN-DISTRICT MEETING

- **Find your member of Congress** and research to find their closest state/district office.
- **Call your member of Congress' state/district office** and ask when the member will be in town. Contact information is found on the member's website.
- **Request to meet at a time the member is available** or during a key time for your policy issue. When you call the office, make sure you have multiple dates and times prepared in case their schedule is overflowing with meetings. Don't forget:
- **Notify the scheduler of the topic you will discuss.**
- It is possible that your meeting will not be a one-on-one meeting with your member of Congress, but rather a group meeting with several constituents discussing the same topic.
- **Follow up via phone** three days later to confirm that your meeting has been scheduled.

THINGS TO KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

- **Consider scheduling the meeting with a group of people.** A larger group (usually no more than five attendees) may make a meeting with a legislator more likely. If you are in a group, designate who will introduce the group, and ensure that each person makes only one key point.
- **Be prepared for a short meeting.** Have your agenda set with points to discuss. Even in home districts, members' schedules can be extremely busy.
- **Know what you want!** Pick one or two very specific issues that you are concerned with, and strategize on how the legislator can help resolve the issue.
- **Know your legislator!** Research beforehand which committees or issues the legislator regularly works on, and predict where they might stand on your issue. If you think they may be resistant to your request, research or imagine what arguments or statistics they may reference so you are not caught off-guard in the meeting.
- Bring one or two newspaper articles, fact sheets or other materials that you may leave behind that summarize your request.
- **Dress appropriately and be on time.** It is often helpful to arrive a little early to be prompt and have time to review your points.

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DURING YOUR MEETING

- **Introduce yourself and/or the group**, mentioning where you come from, whom you represent, and thank the official or staff-member for agreeing to meet.
- **Start the conversation by sharing the reason for your visit.** Continue with a personal story or fact sheet.
- **Make a clear, specific request** of the legislator (e.g. champion or support a specific piece of legislation or funding level for an issue). It is very fair to ask them where they stand on the issue or what they have done to help it.
- **Stay on topic!** Elected officials are often very sociable, and it is very easy to spend most of your meeting time talking about personal details. While you want the meeting to be enjoyable and personal, pay attention to the time and make sure that you have time to fully convey your message.
- Once you have shared your story, most meetings open up to a back and forth conversation. Listen carefully to what the legislator says, and be ready if necessary to politely push back or be encouraging.



It is important to:

Ask key questions about what they will specifically do on the issue in the future.

Inquire as to whether they would be interested in championing the issue if they are already supportive and encourage other legislators to do the same.

Say you will follow up with them or their staff via email to send them materials that relate to your conversation.

AFTER YOUR MEETING

- **Fill out the [ELCA In-District Activity Form](#)** to record your meeting with the ELCA Advocacy Office.
- **Send the legislator any information**, reports or follow-up information that you may have offered during the meeting.
- **Send the office a thank-you note** or email for the meeting.
- **Use social media to amplify the impact of your advocacy message** and to strengthen your relationship with the office. Take pictures during your meetings with officials. Adding pictures, videos and visuals to posts attracts more views, likes and shares on social media.

Share your post with us! On Twitter and Facebook, use the handle @ELCAadvocacy to notify us of your message, and we will share your post with our networks!

NEED HELP?

Reach out to the Lutheran advocacy network in your state! They are ready to support you in this process.

Calif. - Lutheran Office of Public Policy: director@loppca.org
Colo. - Lutheran Advocacy Ministry: pseverson@rmselca.org
Ga. - Southeastern Synod: haustin337@att.net
Minn. - Lutheran Advocacy: tammy@lcppm.org
Nev. - Lutheran Episcopal Advocacy: alorden@att.net
N.J. - Lutheran Episcopal Advocacy Ministry: slilja@learnj.org
N.M. - Lutheran Advocacy Ministry: ruth@lutheranadvocacynm.org

Ohio - Hunger Network in Ohio: nick@hungernetohio.org
Pa. - Lutheran Advocacy Ministry: lampa@lutheranadvocacypa.org
Texas - Texas Impact: sam@texasinterfaith.org
Va. - Virginia Interfaith Center: office@virginiainterfaithcenter.org
Wash. - Faith Action Network: Benz@fanwa.org
Wis. - Lutheran Office for Public Policy: cindyc@loppw.org