

# CONGRESS IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

## STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO CONGRESSIONAL VISITS

Use the step-by-step checklist below to get started on planning for your Congressional visit to your community or organization. We've broken down the process into bite-sized pieces in hopes of making it easier for members.

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### UNDERSTAND THE WHY

Many visits include an opportunity for the member of Congress to take a tour or meet with key staff to discuss important issues, but your invitation can include a range of activities. Before you begin planning, take a moment to clarify what's most important for your member of Congress to experience or discuss. Understanding the "why" will help with planning the activity. Consider these reasons for an invitation:

- Host a site tour to introduce the member of Congress to your community, organization, and/or those you serve.
- Attend an exciting activity or event, such as opening a new art exhibit or launching a new program.
- Discuss aging services workforce challenges and how they translate into day-to-day operations, or the importance of federal programs and funding.
- Learn about the impact high-quality care and services make for older adults and their families in their district, and how federal policy changes could help or hurt access to those services.

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### PLAN

**Select an event or other reason for the invitation.** Special events like ribbon cuttings are great opportunities for a visit, but members of Congress will also welcome a tour of your community and a meeting with selected staff and/or residents to discuss issues impacting your organization and those you serve.

**Coordinate the details.** Select a date and time to offer, with 45-90 minutes for the visit. It is acceptable to invite multiple elected officials to the same meeting or event.

**Prepare to share your stories and talk policy.** The stories shared about your experiences and the older adults you serve are memorable for legislators. LeadingAge has developed a handout of [federal policy asks](#) to help as you prepare to talk about federal policy during your visit. You can also share it with your visitors.

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## INVITE

**Call the congressional office.** [Find your representative's contact information](#), or call the U.S. Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121 with the contact information. Ask to speak with the state or district scheduler when you connect with the Senate or House office. Many offices have more than one scheduler, so it's important to contact the one that manages the Senator's or Representative's state or district schedule.

**Mind the invitation process.** Each office has its own process, so take careful notes and follow the invitation instructions provided by the scheduler. If you leave a voicemail or fill out an online form, make a note of the date for reference in a follow-up.

**Follow up.** If you have not heard back from the office, follow up no sooner than 48 hours to check on the status of your invitation. If the Congress member can't make it but would like to send staff—say yes! It's important for staff working behind the scenes to be knowledgeable about aging services and your organization.

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## POST-VISIT

**Send a thank you.** Send a thank you email and/or card to the member of Congress, as well as the scheduler and other staff who helped coordinate the visit. Include photos that were taken during the visit.

**Report back to LeadingAge.** After the visit to your community or organization, share your photos with LeadingAge and fill out this short [Congressional Visit Survey](#) to share what you learned—and for a chance at a free registration to the 2023 LeadingAge Annual Meeting!