Visiting local congressional offices

Visiting a legislator's office, either locally or in Washington, D.C., is the most effective way for a citizen to do advocacy. Congressional recesses are an excellent time to meet locally with your legislator (click here for the schedule for the House and the Senate).

Step 1: Identify your members of Congress. If you are not sure who your Representative or Senators are, click here. Then check their websites (available through http://house.gov/ and http://senate.gov) to see where their local offices are located and to get contact information for them.

Step 2: Schedule the visit. Schedule ahead, preferably at least two weeks in advance, specifying the issue you wish to discuss. Mention a preferred date and length of meeting as well as the number of people coming.

Step 3: Prepare. If you are visiting as a group, meet in advance to assign roles and decide who will make which points. Research information on your legislator’s co-sponsorship of bills and previous votes. (The MCC Washington Office is happy to help with this.) You will also want to bring printed copies of any materials you want to leave with the office.

Step 4: Meet.

- Introduce yourselves. Thank them for meeting with you, and allow the members of the group to introduce themselves.
- Be flexible. Be prepared for both a 5-minute meeting as well as a 45 minute meeting. It's not uncommon for the schedules of legislators and their aides to change at the last minute. Be prepared to get your point across even if you don't have as much time as anticipated.
- Be honest and respectful. It's all right to respond to a legislator's question by admitting you don't know. Offer to find out and send information back to the office. Be polite and respectful, but don't be afraid to disagree.
- Ask questions. Ask what his/her position is on the legislation and why. Ask if they are hearing from opponents or supporters and what they are saying. Ask what will influence their decision on this issue.
- Leave materials.

Step 5: Follow up. Write a follow up letter thanking the legislator or staff member for the meeting. Reiterate your position. Then, let the MCC Washington Office know how it went!