

Requesting a District Office Meeting with your Member of Congress's Staff

Goals of District Office Meeting with Staff for your Member of Congress (MOC):

- Obtain a commitment from staff that the Member of Congress will seek a solution to sequestration that protects funding for education and language programs.
- Take a picture with the Member of Congress (or staff) to use in your newsletters, publications, and other outreach.
- Build a relationship with your Members of Congress and position yourself as a leading resource on language learning in your community
- Educate your Members of Congress about the importance of language learning.

Action Steps

- 1) **Compose an email** asking district office staff for a meeting on foreign language learning. Specifically ask if the DC-based Legislative Assistant responsible for foreign language can be included in the meeting via conference call.
- 2) **Draft an agenda.** Use this agenda (internally only) to guide your conversation with the congressional staff. However, do not be too rigid with your agenda. Meetings are often the most successful when individuals are asking questions and have created a dialogue instead of giving a speech. Here is a draft agenda for you to work off of:
 - Introduce meeting participants
 - Ask the staff if they know a foreign language and have any experience with language learning
 - Provide information on local language programs
 - Provide data and research on language education
 - Educate the staff about the role that ACTFL and your state association play
 - Provide the staff with the coalition letter to President Obama
 - i. Describe the programs included in the letter
 - Provide the staff with the letter you sent to his or her office on sequestration (this can be found on the ACTFL site)
 - i. **ASK THE STAFF IF THEIR BOSS WILL SEEK A SOLUTION TO SEQUESTRATION THAT PROTECTS FUNDING FOR EDUCATION AND LANGUAGE PROGRAMS**
 - Ask the staff for an update on what is going on in DC and their perspective on what will happen with sequestration
 - Ask the staff if they would like to come to your school to experience language learning in the classroom
 - Thank the staff for their time and interest
- 3) **Prepare a packet of information.** Print enough copies of your materials for all participants and place them in a folder. Email the documents to the LA participating via phone. Here is a list of potential materials for inclusion:
 - Business cards for individuals who are joining the meeting
 - State association one-pager
 - ACTFL one-pager
 - Data on the benefits of language learning
 - Coalition letter to President Obama
 - Letter to your Member of Congress on sequestration

- 4) **Arrive early.** Give yourself enough time to meet with your partners and review the agenda ahead of time – this should be done outside of the office and away from the eyes of the staff. Make sure to arrive in the waiting room prior to your schedule appointment time.
- 5) **Remain flexible,** Members of Congress often have busy schedules and are only in the district or state for a few days a month. Staff can be pulled into unexpected meetings or run late due to uncontrolled circumstances.
- 6) **During the meeting** remember to “ask” the staff if their boss will defend education and language programs during sequestration. Don’t be shy. Try to make personal connections with the staff – they might have graduated from the same high school that you teach in, for instance. Smile and be friendly – people want to say “yes” to individuals who they’ve enjoyed interacting with. **TAKE A PICTURE OF THE GROUP WITH THE MOC’S STAFF.**
- 7) **Follow Up** with the staff by sending a thank you email to all participants. Send the message to district and DC staff and cc your partners. If you are willing to bcc Marty (mabbott@actfl.org) or Jill (JAMurray@sheridangroupDC.com), that would be great!
- 8) **Share how your meeting went.** Please let Marty (mabbott@actfl.org) and Jill (JAMurray@sheridangroupDC.com) know how the meeting went. Send us a photo of your group at the district office with the staff. We’d like to showcase your advocacy!