



How to Run Your Lobby Meeting

Lobby Meeting Packet

- - - This document coincides with Step 4 of the Lobby Meeting Planning Guide - - -

So, now that your lobby day meeting has been set it up, it's time to get ready for the meeting. Below is a brief guide on how to hold an effective meeting. It's often a good idea to have more than one person at the meeting. Keep the atmosphere of the meeting friendly! You are there to exchange ideas and gather support.

Step 1: Prepare and Practice for Your Visit

Materials: Gather some materials to give to your representative or senator at the beginning of your meeting. Your materials packets should include:

- ⇒ Any written information you have about your group or coalition, including a list of groups that are coalition members.
- ⇒ Press clippings of any articles written about your organization or your events.
- ⇒ Contact information for you or your group.
- ⇒ Information about the legislative or policy asks you are making.

Research: Check to see if your member of Congress has taken any other action on Darfur. If he or she has, begin the meeting by thanking them for their good work. Go to www.darfurscores.org for information about your member's record on Darfur issues.

Pre-Meeting: Sometime before your visit, bring together your group (if more than one person will be meeting with the representative/senator) for a simple, informal preparation and training session.

Prioritize: The lobby meeting should take between 30 – 60 minutes, but it could take as little as 5 – 10 minutes. If you only have a short meeting, be prepared to prioritize. The most important topics to get to in the conversation are:

- ⇒ Your asks – tell your representative or senator how you want him or her to vote, and what other action you would like them to take.
- ⇒ Building a relationship with your congressperson or senator. You want to be known as a reliable source of information concerning Darfur issues.

Delegate: Now that you have set up everything it would be good to create roles for everyone that will participate. This will help to keep the meeting focused and on time. Below is a suggestion on how you could break up the roles (the roles are really driven by our suggested agenda). Depending on the size of your delegation, some people may have multiple roles that they play. Roles include:

- ⇒ **Facilitator** – This is the person that will run the meeting, keep it on time, and often closes the meeting with the follow up plan.
- ⇒ **Policy Introduction** – Educate yourself and be prepared to talk about upcoming Darfur legislation. This person could also be responsible for communicating the asks, but it's also fine to have it be another person.
- ⇒ **Local Grassroots** – This person would talk about local grassroots activities. Be specific about numbers, “On April 28th, 1000 people gathered at the local concert hall in support of...”
- ⇒ **Note Taker** - Someone should take notes and listen to responses so follow up questions can be tailored appropriately.
- ⇒ **Follow Up** - While it may not be a big focus of the meeting, someone should be designated as the “point of contact” or follow up person after the meeting.



Step 2: Visit Your Congressperson's Local Office

Agenda

* Remember that your time with your representative or senator may be limited, so prioritize the ASKS.

1. **Introductions** – Everyone in the group should introduce themselves to the candidate with a brief background on who they represent and, in some cases, a brief background on their connection to the issue.
2. **Thank you for past votes/Darfur efforts** – If your candidate has a good voting record on Darfur (find out at www.darfurscores.org), then thank them. If possible, it is always be good to specific. This lets them know that you're paying attention to how they vote.
3. **Overview of local grassroots efforts** – Again, give specific numbers: “We have 3000 activists, we’ve held 4 events,” etc...
4. **Asks** – “These are the bills we want you to support/co-sponsor, and this is why they’re important.”
⇒ Download the latest legislative info at www.SaveDarfur.org/DarfurInYourDistrict.

Specifically, ask “Will you vote for ____?” Whether they say “yes” or “no” determines your next move:

1. **If they're responsive:** Then ask that they do even more:

- ⇒ Invite them to one of your upcoming events.
- ⇒ If they will vote for a bill, will they also cosponsor it?
- ⇒ Ask them to cosign or write an op-ed piece in your local paper.
- ⇒ Ask them to facilitate and participate in meetings with community leaders.

2. **If they're unresponsive:**

- ⇒ Pressure them to give specific reasons for their failure to support Darfur legislation.
- ⇒ Urge them to support Darfur legislation in the future.
- ⇒ Communicate your disappointment, be assertive but respectful.

Looking Forward: What else does s/he see him/herself working on in relation to Darfur? What are his/her future plans for action? If you are provided with the opportunity, it can also be useful to find out if they have heard of other efforts that we should be aware of.

TIP: Meeting Conduct and etiquette are important things to consider when you meet with your member of Congress
When you are at your meeting, keep in mind:

- ⇒ **Balance Politeness and Assertiveness:** This is the best (if not only) way to get serious attention and real action from your congressional office.
- ⇒ **Stay on Topic:** Don't stray to other topics - stay completely focused on Darfur.
- ⇒ **Be as specific as possible:** Especially when making your asks, make sure your question is specific: "Will you vote for ____?" or "Will you make a public pledge to support Darfur-related legislation?"



Step 3: Follow Up

The follow-up to your meeting is sometimes even more important than the meeting itself. After your meeting, please:

Call or e-mail congressional staff: First, you should thank that person for the meeting. Second, you should ask if and when s/he will do what you asked — and continue to contact this person until s/he has done what you asked. Also, if the legislator asked for certain information, be sure you get back to the legislator with that information. Remember that one objective of your contact is to establish an ongoing relationship with your legislator and establish yourself as a reliable source of information.

Local Commitments: Ask your member of Congress to participate in an upcoming event or hold a town hall meeting on Darfur.

E-mail SDC and tell us how it went! Did the member of Congress (or a member of his/her staff) agree to follow through on your "asks"? If not, why?

The Save Darfur Coalition will provide a debriefing questionnaire to fill out and return to lobby@savedarfur.org.

For more information:
www.savedarfur.org/DarfurInYourDistrict
lobby@savedarfur.org