

ATTENDING A TOWN HALL OR CAMPAIGN EVENT

If you reach out to your congressional member's district office staff and find that a private meeting or tour of your facility will not fit the schedule, there are still ways to see your representative or senator while he or she is in town. Attending a campaign fundraiser or a town hall-style public event (or a meet-and-greet event) will get you the opportunity to briefly meet face-to-face and discuss the issues.

Here is a list of tips for making this happen:

1. Finding Event Information

Because of campaign finance rules, congressional campaign events and legislative events for constituents must remain separate. This means you will seek out information about these events from two different sources.

Campaign Events – Go to your member's campaign website to look for events or for a phone number to call the local campaign office. To find the site, search for their name online and the word "campaign." "Representative Doe Campaign," for example. You'll be required to give a contribution at the event, but doing so will be worth the opportunity to be involved and meet face-to-face even if for a moment.

Legislative Events – Call the district office to learn more about meet-and-greet opportunities. You can find the office located closest to you on the official legislative website, which is different than the campaign site. You'll know this site because the web address will look official and be followed by .gov.

2. What to Expect

All events will ask you to sign in. They will usually allow time for meet-and-greet and then the member of Congress will give a speech about current policy issues or a motivational campaign talk. Make sure to make your way to the Congress member early. If you sit back and wait, you may miss the opportunity.

3. Connect with Staff at the Event

The member of Congress will always have staff nearby to help the event run smoothly. The person who is the "right hand" of the congressman will be quite visible. Go up to that person and ask him or her for a moment to speak with the congressman. Mention "issues related to Medicare" and also that you would like to get a photo with the

congressman. The earlier you do this, the more likely it is you will get the face-to-face time you want. Also, ask the staffer for the name and email address of the person to follow up with in the Washington, D.C., office and one name and email address of a local staffer. Ask specifically for those who work with health or Medicare issues. In the future you can send important email messages directly to those staffers.

4. Check Your Ideology at the Door

It's important to meet with members of Congress whether or not you agree with their policy positions. Particularly during campaign events when the congressman is speaking to their partisan base, it might be difficult to listen to if you don't agree with the points being made. Remember you are here for one reason today. Stay focused and stick to your issue. Don't be sidetracked by the show.

5. It's Your Turn to Talk Now

Your tone and "elevator speech" will be key to getting your point across. When you get the opportunity to talk, be friendly and factual. Don't be confrontational. Give scenarios about how your business and customers are being impacted by CMS policy. They should now know what competitive bidding and audits are, so you should be able to move into your everyday concerns without starting from square one. Tell a true, local and factual story to make the situation more real.

6. Follow-Up

Email a thank you that includes the policy guide. Again, if you attended a fundraiser, do not mention the fundraiser in the email. Just mention the date you met and offer thanks and more information.