

Guide for preparing for congressional staffer meetings

Overview

- Outline your GOAL for the meeting, and your ask
- Research your congressperson well, see resources below
 - Know what motivates them, where you can find common ground, know about their district
 - Do they have an interest in your research area?
 - How have they voted on recent bills relevant to your research or science more broadly?
 - What institutions related to science and technology exist within their district/state, that have received funding from science agencies
 - Is there a natural interest in a specific topic, based on the geography of the district/state (e.g. coral reefs in Florida)?
 - Are there any recent major news on their district/state or a topic that interests them or you want to talk about with them?
- Know some facts about what you are going to talk about
 - Eg. [Resource list about science funding](#) for some numbers relevant to their state
 - Plus anything else you want to bring up
- Prepare your elevator pitch and how you would introduce/work with your CVD team. Including:
 - Who are you + you are coming with SPI from MIT
 - Introduce other members of the group
 - Remind them of your connection to the state
 - Say why you're there
 - Talk about your research briefly
 - PREPARE QUESTIONS FOR THEM
 - People like being listened to more than lectured to
- Make sure you make a leave behind that reflects what you want to discuss
- **Print out your "Leave Behinds"**. Ideally you should have at least one for you to reference during the meeting and one for each staffer you are planning to meet with. An extra can be useful in case one gets bent or an unexpected additional staffer joins the meeting.
- **Confirm you have "Business Formal" clothes.**

Researching your congressperson

Congress person's website

- Somewhat biased but it tells you what their priorities are and often has press releases detailing their role in getting something passed. You'll find out what they want to make sure people know about them.
- Often tells you what committees or caucuses/coalitions they are part of which indicates interests in an issue. If they are a chair of the caucus, that indicates even more engagement.

Congress.gov

- Use Congress.gov to see what bills each senator or representative has sponsored (introduced) or cosponsored (willing to have their name associated with someone else's bill). This allows you to see how involved they are in different policy areas.
 - <https://www.congress.gov/>
 - If generally trying to see recently introduced bills related to a keyword, just type in that keyword in the search bar.
 - If looking up a specific person, the following is one way to do it:
 - Click on "More options" to expand the search bar
 - Select either the congress of interest (ie. current 119th Congress for recent stuff, or the first option to see the entire history of this congress person's activity.)
 - Choose a specific senator or representative from the respective lists (example below with Sen. Ed Markey, MA)
 - Check the Sponsor and/or Cosponsor box depending on how much you want to see. The list of cosponsored bills will be MUCH longer than the sponsored bill list. The sponsored bill list will tell you what each congress person took the initiative to put forward (and therefore is one of their priorities)
 - Optionally, add keywords at the top in the "Words and Phrases" box.

CONGRESS.GOV

Advanced Searches | Browse

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Legislation | Congressional Record | Committees | Members

Legislation

Legislation Text

Committee Reports

Congressional Record

Nominations

House Communications

Senate Communications

Treaty Documents

Words & Phrases

Examples: "Trade Relations", "Export Controls"

☐ Include full text when available
 ☒ Word Variants
 ☐ Case Sensitive
 Search Only:
 ☐ Titles
 ☐ Summaries
 ☐ Actions

Congress (Years)

☒ 1973-2026
 ☐ Historical (1799-1811, 1813-1873, 1951-1972)

93-119 (1973-2026)

119 (2025-2026)

118 (2023-2024)

117 (2021-2022)

116 (2019-2020)

Sponsors/Cosponsors

☒ Sponsor
 ☐ Cosponsor

Any Representative

Markey, Edward J. [D-MA] (113th-119th)

Legislation and Law Numbers

Examples: hr5, h.r.5, sjres8, sa2, pl116-21, 86Stat1326

Legislative Actions

Any Legislative Action

[About Legislation](#) | [Browse Legislation by Actions](#)

Reset Form

Search

FEWER OPTIONS

- Below is the result of the above search:

Hide Filters

Show Tracker

1-100 of 117

100 per page

1 of 2

Sort by

Date of Introducti

View

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Limit Your Search

Check all

☐ Legislation [117]

Congress

Check all

☐ 118 (2023-2024) [117]

Chamber of Origin

Senate

[117]

Bill Type

Status of Legislation

Status of Amendment

Subject — Policy Area

Health

[22]

Transportation and Public Works

[12]

International Affairs

[8]

Crime and Law Enforcement

[7]

Education

[6]

Show more

1. [S.Amdt.1816](#) — 118th Congress (2023-2024)

Purpose: Purpose displays after an amendment is proposed. | [View Text](#)

Amends Bill: [H.R.2882](#)

Sponsor: [Markey, Edward J. \[Sen.-D-MA\]](#) (Submitted 03/22/2024)

2. [S.Res.593](#) — 118th Congress (2023-2024)

A resolution expressing support for the continued value of arms control agreements and condemning the Russian Federation's purported suspension of its participation in the New START Treaty.

Sponsor: [Markey, Edward J. \[Sen.-D-MA\]](#) (Introduced 03/19/2024) Cosponsors: (6)

Committees: Senate - Foreign Relations

Latest Action: Senate - 03/19/2024 Referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations. ([All Actions](#))

3. [S.3855](#) — 118th Congress (2023-2024)

Connect the Grid Act of 2024

Sponsor: [Markey, Edward J. \[Sen.-D-MA\]](#) (Introduced 02/29/2024) Cosponsors: (1)

Committees: Senate - Energy and Natural Resources

Latest Action: Senate - 02/29/2024 Read twice and referred to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. ([All Actions](#))

4. [S.Amdt.1604](#) to [S.Amdt.1388](#) — 118th Congress (2023-2024)

Purpose: Purpose displays after an amendment is proposed. | [View Text](#)

Amends Bill: [H.R.815](#)

Sponsor: [Markey, Edward J. \[Sen.-D-MA\]](#) (Submitted 02/10/2024)

5. [S.3732](#) — 118th Congress (2023-2024)

Artificial Intelligence Environmental Impacts Act of 2024

Sponsor: [Markey, Edward J. \[Sen.-D-MA\]](#) (Introduced 02/01/2024) Cosponsors: (6)

Committees: Senate - Commerce, Science, and Transportation

Latest Action: Senate - 02/01/2024 Read twice and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. ([All Actions](#))

- You can expand the “Subject - Policy Area” on the left side bar, and filter out for the bills topic of interest for this senator. Often

Science/Research related fields are among the policy areas. If there are few policy areas in the 119th congress, it's because it just started after the election. You can also explore the 118th congress for recent activity.

- One of the policy areas (after clicking on “show more”) was “Science, Technology, Communications”. Select that one and the site will filter the results.

Limit Your Search

Check all

☐ Legislation

Congress

Check all

☒ 119 (2025-2026)

Chamber of Origin

Senate

Bill Type

Status of Legislation

Subject - Policy Area

Science, Technology, Communications

1. [S.315](#) — 119th Congress (2025-2026)

AM Radio for Every Vehicle Act of 2025

Sponsor: [Markey, Edward J. \[Sen.-D-MA\]](#) (Introduced 01/29/2025) Cosponsors: (50)

Committees: Senate - Commerce, Science, and Transportation

Latest Action: Senate - 02/05/2025 Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. Or

2. [S.103](#) — 119th Congress (2025-2026)

Extend the TikTok Deadline Act

Sponsor: [Markey, Edward J. \[Sen.-D-MA\]](#) (Introduced 01/15/2025) Cosponsors: (3)

Committees: Senate - Commerce, Science, and Transportation

Latest Action: Senate - 01/15/2025 Read twice and referred to the Committee on Commerce, S

1-2 of 2

- Click and browse around, and see at what stage a given bill will be at currently. Senator-introduced bills start with S. while the House Representative-introduced bills start with H. Res. If too recent, there may not be a summary of the bill yet.

Practice your pitch

- Every pitch and staffer interaction will be different, so it is hard to give clear uniform advice. Strive to make your pitch relevant to the staffer / office you will be speaking with and your goals for the meeting.
- Your meetings will often be ~15min long (although they can sometimes run longer if the staffer is particularly engaged). Your goal is to make your meeting as productive as possible:
 - A **bad pitch** has both you and the staffer awkwardly sitting in silence (make sure you have a plan so this doesn't happen).
 - An **okay pitch** has you say your 3-5min speech, and then the meeting ends.
 - A **great pitch** has you say your 3-5min speech, and then engage in a dynamic back and forth dialogue. This can take the form of prompting the staffer with office specific questions or asking them questions about what they've been working on. It can be challenging to rehearse / practice these skills beforehand

since every office will have different interests and priorities. That being said, read up on the office and the staffer you will be meeting with to be equipped with relevant conversation topics.

- An **outstanding pitch** has you say your 3-5min speech, engage in a dynamic back and forth dialogue, and find meaningful ways to follow up after the meeting (i.e., provide useful information to the staffer).
 - **Note:** Sometimes you'll have a mediocre meeting at no fault of your own (i.e., the staffer was just distracted, overworked, busy, or disinterested). Your job is to do your homework to maximize the chance of having an outstanding meeting.
 - Be comfortable resuming your pitch from various points (e.g., you should be comfortable having your speech interrupted with questions and resuming your pitch afterwards)
 - Be comfortable reading the room and modifying your pitch to your audience. Possible examples include:
 - You realize a staffer is less interested in education funding and more interested in US global competitiveness. As a result, you modify your pitch to emphasize how increased science funding can help improve the US economy.
 - You realize a staffer has a technical background (e.g., a STEM PhD) and thus already know how the NSF works and why it is so important for scientific research (i.e., continuing to explain things they already know can be viewed as “boring” and “talking down to the staffer”). As a result, you modify your pitch to skip over “background material” and discuss more nitty-gritty technical details.
 - Give the staffers an opportunity to talk if they have something to say. (Turns out a secret to getting people to like you is letting them speak more than you!)
 - Practice, practice, practice! Ideally, meet with other CVD members and critique each other's pitches.
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Elect a scribe

- For the final report, we will need to write a brief (i.e., on average ~3-5 short paragraphs) for each meeting we run.
- To facilitate this, each meeting should elect a scribe to take notes during the meeting. Notes should be hand-written or taken on a tablet. ***Don't have someone typing away on their laptop, it can be considered rude!***
- Core information to record:
 - Which office you met with
 - Present student advocates
 - Present staffer
 - Summary of meeting discussion topics, especially:
 - Topics of interest to the office
 - Questions asked by office

- Action items (e.g., information either party agrees to follow up with)
 - [Here](#) is an example of a previous year's final report.
 - We will provide a Google Doc at a later date to transfer your notes and instructions on how to write up the meeting summaries.
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Send a follow up email

- Send a follow up email thanking the staffer for meeting with you – this should ideally go out ***the day after you met*** and ***absolutely no later than the end of the week (i.e., Friday)***.
- Attach a PDF copy of your leave behind.
- If other staffers correspond with you via email, but were not present in the actual meeting feel free to include them on the thank you email – this way more people will see the leave behind.
- Include (i.e., cc) the all other CVD members who joined the meeting (even if they weren't on the original thread)
- Provide any additional information you agreed to follow up with (or, if it is something larger, give a date you will follow up by – and then do that!)