



#SaveSchoolLunch Office Visit Guide

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Goals of the office visit with your elected official:

- 1) Educate both the elected official and local media about SNAP and free school lunch, why saving them matters, and why the Department of Agriculture's proposed rule will hurt your community.
- 2) Show the elected official and local media that there's tons of grassroots political energy across your area in support of SNAP and free school lunch, by bringing the petitions and sharing your stories.
- 3) Get the elected official to agree to speak out in favor of SNAP and free school lunch by either adding their name to the sign-on letter (mayors/city officials) and/or sharing a statement publicly within two weeks (Senators) - in time to impact the Department of Agriculture's decision-making.

TIPS FOR MEETING WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS:

- Be polite and respectful.
- If you have a scheduled time for the visit set in advance with the office, be on time.
- Expect the meeting to last 10-20 minutes.
- For mayors and city officials, it's a good idea to call in advance to see if they can set a time to meet with you that week - but it's totally fine to drop by an elected official's public office to deliver these petitions even if you don't have a scheduled meeting in advance.

- Meeting directly with the elected official is the goal, but you may meet with staffers instead. Treat the staffers with the same respect and care as you would the elected official; often, they are the key point person on the particular issue you're talking about.
- Mention any personal connections you have to the issue - ie, if someone in the meeting has benefitted from SNAP or the Free School Lunch program, if you are a teacher who knows firsthand how hard it is for hungry children to learn, etc.
- You don't need to be a policy expert! Speak about your experiences, values, and community, and use the materials provided for more context.
- Be clear, firm, and confident about what you're asking for, and ask the leader to get back to you about their action or decision within a specified timeline.
- Review and practice the things you're going to say, so you are all conveying a shared message and can keep the meeting focused and on task.
- Follow up immediately with a letter or email to thank the leader and their staff for meeting with you.

Before you have your office visit:

- If you are meeting with mayors or local elected officials, have you called the office in advance and ask when a good time would be the week of October 21-25th to briefly visit with your elected official in support of SNAP and free school lunch? (Check out the script in the Host Guide!) Then, be sure to email them the SNAP support letter you're asking them to sign on to, so they have it before you arrive.
- If you're visiting a Senators' office, have you verified which office you're visiting and the hours it's open? (For targets who are U.S. Senators, we don't recommend trying to make an appointment in advance -- but it's good to make sure they'll be open when you arrive).
- Do you know who else is joining you, and do they know the date, time, and location of the visit? Have you and your participants coordinated where and when to meet up in advance of the office visit so you can go in together?
- Have you reviewed the sample agenda below, divvied up the roles, and decided who will say what?
- Has someone taken on media outreach? (This is a great role for someone to take on at your house meeting!) Have they reviewed the media guide and gone through the steps, include things like, brainstorming a list of outlets, editing the press advisory to add in the details for your specific event, and then sending it out to local media? Have you decided who will take the lead on talking to reporters? For more on reaching out to press, [check out our media guide here](#). You can see tips and print out sample news advisories.
- Have you and your team printed out all your materials for Elected Office visits - especially the petition signatures of all the people in your state who signed ParentsTogether's petition, so you can leave them with your elected official?

SAMPLE AGENDA FOR YOUR OFFICE VISIT: 45 minutes total

25 minutes before Office Visit: Arrive at venue

15 minutes before Office Visit: if you have invited local media, tell any reporters who come why you personally care about school lunch, why you're urging elected officials to join the effort, and why thousands of people across the state have spoken out. If you're meeting with Senators, emphasize that you're here to call on them to join you in challenging the Trump Administration's harmful rule. If you're meeting with mayors and city officials, emphasize why this issue is important locally, and why 9. Take photos, and have someone keep a list of reporters contact info to follow up. Be sure to hand them the media packet you printed out!

5 minutes before Office Visit: head in together to deliver the petitions and visit with your elected official.

1) Introductions - 5 mins.

- Start by thanking your [Mayor, School Board, State Rep, Senator] or staff person for making time to speak with you about this critical issue.
- Introduce yourself and whomever else is there with you. Everyone briefly shares their name and why they came to the meeting.

2) Explaining why you're there - 5 min

- Tell your elected official or their staff member that you've come to talk about SNAP and saving free school lunch.
- If any of you have personally been affected by/benefited from this program, share that with the elected official/staff member.
- Talking points to share about why this issue is so important:
 - The USDA is currently proposing changes to SNAP benefits (food stamps) that would result in up to 3.1 million people no longer receiving those benefits.
 - Students whose families receive SNAP benefits are automatically eligible for free lunches (and often breakfasts). Students whose families lose SNAP benefits could also lose those free lunch benefits.
 - Because of this new proposed rule, half a million children could lose their free lunches.
 - For many of these families, the free lunch program is the only way they can afford lunch. For some kids, school lunch is the ONLY meal they can be sure they will get every weekday.
 - If we take free lunches away from these kids at the same time as we're taking away SNAP benefits from their families, we can be certain thousands of children will go hungry.
- Talking points about grassroots widespread support to share:
 - You are just one (or some) of hundreds of people who are doing the same thing in their own cities and states this week - part of a much larger effort fighting to save SNAP and free school lunch.

- 1.4 million people around the country signed on to support ParentsTogether's #SaveSchoolLunch petition - XX in our state alone! (Be sure to hand over the printed petition signatures. This will be updated for hosts on Friday, October 18th.)
- For mayors and local elected officials: 70 Mayors have already signed on to a version of the letter in the packet. (Make sure they have the copy of the letter in front of them.)
- For Senators: Republican Susan Collins has already voiced her opposition, in addition to key members of the Senate Agriculture Committee. (Make sure they have the copy of the Susan Collins letter in front of them.)

3) Making the ask - 5 min

- Ask them to make a commitment right there and then! This Department of Agriculture decision could happen very soon, and their voices are needed! The specific ask depends on your elected official:
 - For Mayors and City Officials: "Will you publicly add your name to this sign-on letter opposing the proposed SNAP cuts to kick half a million children off school lunch?" (Again, make sure they have the printed copy of the letter in hand.)
 - For Senators: "Will you make a public statement opposing these proposed SNAP and school lunch cuts and urging the Department of Agriculture to reject this proposed rule?" (Make sure they have the printed copy of the Susan Collins statement in hand.)

4) Getting a commitment and determining next steps - 5 min

- It's important to get the firmest commitments possible.
- If you're meeting with the staffers, they'll always need some time to check in with the elected official themselves, even if they're really supportive, so making the plan for when you can get an answer and follow-up is critical.
- If they say they need more time (the likeliest outcome): Remind them that the Administration is reviewing comments right now, and their voice is needed urgently - then ask them when you can expect them to make their decision, and to commit to follow up with you and let you know when they've made it. Make sure they have your phone and email contact info.
 - Ask if there's additional information they need to make their decision.
 - Let them know that if you haven't heard from them by the next week, you will follow up with them.
 - Let them know that we'll be continuing to share updates on whatever their answer is to your local community and thousands of signers statewide - and that you hope to be able to celebrate their decision to show up for hungry kids.
- If they say yes and agree to sign the SNAP letter/issue a public statement right away:

- Thank them! And celebrate their leadership - their voice will make a big difference in saving school lunch for half a million kids and over 3 million families around the country.
- Get their commitment in writing - either by signing the letter right there, or by having their office send an email to snap@parents-together.com including their name, office, affirming that they will join as signers.
- Let them know that we'll be sharing the news of their support to the local community and to the thousands of signers statewide.
- Take a photo if possible of your team with the signed letter and the elected official!
- If they say no, or push back with the Administration's talking points:
 - Be polite, friendly and respectful - do not get into an argument or back-and-forth policy debate.
 - Do reiterate firmly that the core points you've made, that this harmful rule will impact you and your community, and that as your elected official, you and the thousands of fellow supporters urge them to oppose the rule and help save school lunch.
 - Thank them for their time, and let them know that you'll be sharing updates on their decisions with your community.

5) Conclude

- Thank everyone for coming!
- Reiterate any of the commitments and next steps that have been made.
- Let your elected official or their staff person know that you look forward to hearing from them soon.

PACKETS TO PRINT FOR YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS:

- Here's the packet to use for [for Mayors and Local Elected Officials](#). It includes:
 - Fact Sheet/Overview letter to elected official
 - SNAP sign on letter for them to sign
 - A list of mayoral supporters nationwide
 - News Clips
 - Sample tweets/statements
 - A placeholder for you to include Petitions (to be updated October 18th)
- Here's the packet to use for [Senate offices](#)! This includes:
 - Fact Sheet/Overview letter to Senator
 - A letter from Senator Susan Collins (R-ME) and the Maine Delegation
 - News Clips
 - Sample tweets/statements

- **A placeholder for you to include Petitions (to be updated October 18th)**

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