



## Tips for Successful Federal Advocacy

1. **Be flexible.** If you are meeting on Capitol Hill, know that congressional schedules change frequently, and members may be called away unexpectedly for committee business or floor votes. Meetings may need to be shortened, rescheduled, or relocated at the last minute. If the legislator is unavailable, remember that congressional staff play an important role in advising members on policy issues. Staff meetings can be just as useful as member meetings.
2. **Be prepared.** As you hone your key messages and talking points, think about the purpose of the meeting. Is it informational? Do you have an ask? If there are others in the meeting, plan as a team who will deliver which messages to keep the conversation running smoothly. Prepare a succinct version of your talking points in case the meeting gets cut short.
3. **Have a personal story ready.** You can amplify the impact of your message by incorporating a story from your own experience. For example, if you are advocating for funding for research, consider talking about how that funding benefits the state or your own lab.
4. **Know your audience and make connections.** Familiarize yourself with the elected official's policy views, and the demographics of their district (the ERC federal team can help with this!). Look for things you may have in common, such as interests, hometowns, friends, and, of course, the U of I System universities. If you're meeting with your own local representative or their staff, make sure to mention that you're a constituent!
5. **Be sure the information you provide is accurate.** Legislators may ask you questions about the policies you are advocating for or about unrelated topics. Don't guess or overstate anything. It is okay to tell them you don't know the answer and you will follow up.

6. **Be courteous.** Sometimes a legislator may have a different opinion than you. Please remember to be respectful despite any disagreements, both in person and on social media.
7. **Follow up.** After the meeting, be sure to follow up on any promised actions or unanswered questions.

## Questions?

[Paul Weinberger](#), Assistant Vice President Federal Relations

[Melissa Haas](#), Director of Federal Relations

[Colin Kerr](#), Federal Relations Specialist