



*American Academy of Forensic Sciences
American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors
International Association for Identification
International Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners
National Association of Medical Examiners
Society of Forensic Toxicologists*

2026 TOOLKIT FOR HOSTING IN-DISTRICT VISITS AND MEETINGS WITH MEMBERS OF CONGRESS AND/OR THEIR STAFF

A step-by-step guide with resources and templates



CONSORTIUM OF FORENSIC SCIENCE ORGANIZATIONS

STEP BY STEP GUIDE FOR A POLICYMAKER IN-DISTRICT VISIT

DISTRICT VISITS GUIDE

This guide outlines essential steps to organize a visit with Members of Congress or their staff in their home districts/states. It is vital that we communicate to Congress the importance of federal investment in forensic science and the impact that current policies will have on the application of science to justice.¹

Why In-District Meetings Matter?

Meeting with elected officials while they are home in their districts/states is the perfect opportunity for forensic science practitioners to showcase their laboratories, offices, programs, services and how you and science contribute to convicting the guilty and exonerating the innocent.

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

1. Set up Meeting/Make Invite with District Office ([Link](#)).
2. Coordinate internally. Identify a person in your office to coordinate meeting/visit details once a date/time has been set. Hold an internal meeting to establish goals, talking points and what material(s) you will bring to the meeting ([Link](#)).
3. Create a meeting agenda ([Link](#)) ([Sample Agenda](#))
4. Follow up.
 - a. Write a thank you letter to the Representative/Senator and/or Staffer with a short summary of the meeting.
 - b. Provide a summary of the meeting to relevant individuals and stakeholders.

STEP ONE-MAKING THE INVITE:

Most policymakers will want a letter of invitation ([Link to Example](#)), but always call first to ensure you have the right person to email an invite to, which likely will be a staff person.

Find out who your Member of Congress—click here ([CFSO LINK](#)).

1. Call the Member's district office first, their number will be in the above link, if you need help call your CFSO Representative ([CFSO LINK](#)).
2. Advise them that you would like to invite the Member and staff to visit during National Forensic Science Week—ask for a POC (Note: it is likely the scheduler)
3. Invite the policymaker (**and staff**) to tour your office during National Forensic Science Week and **email** a formal letter after the call (see letter sample).
 - It is okay to be persistent and follow up in a week if you do not hear back from the scheduler.
 - Be flexible and bear in mind that Members of Congress keep very busy schedules, even when they are in their district. If the scheduler offers for you to meet with a staff person rather than the Member of Congress, please accept the meeting as they advise the Members of Congress.
 - If they can't make it during that week then be open to another day, **the earlier you call the better. We suggest at least one month in advance.**

STEP TWO: COORDINATE INTERNALLY

Once a meeting has been arranged, reach out to your staff to communicate any details that are necessary and available at that time. If a date/time has not yet been finalized with the policymaker's scheduler or other POC you may still move forward with your team to discuss goals

¹ Some laboratories and Medical Examiners may have to obtain authorization from parent organizations to contact political figures.

and strategies. Schedule a meeting to discuss goals, talking points including concrete data on impacts of policies/lack of funding/delays in grant award/staff shortages to your office and to agree on what you will ask the Member of Congress or congressional staff to do. Organize a packet for them to take with them (see attached CFSO documents for national asks).

STEP THREE: SETTING THE MEETING AGENDA

1) Research on your visitor

- Visit their personal office websites at www.house.gov or at www.senate.gov.
- Read their biography and learn about their leadership role and its purpose in the structure of Congress. Maybe they went to the same university you went to or grew up in the same area you did. Having something in common can help you start connecting with them.
- Visit their respective leadership office websites at <http://www.house.gov/leadership/> or <http://www.senate.gov/senators/leadership.htm> to learn about their party's priorities.
- Understand that while you are speaking to them as a constituent, as leaders for their chamber and party, these individuals must balance local and district interests with national agendas and party priorities.

2) Agenda/Schedule

- Policymakers want to understand what is going on in their district or state, but they also want to know what they can do to help. (see suggested agenda/schedule in toolkit).
- Provide them a tour of your lab and explain to them what you do in your lab or office, and how your results provide critical evidence to the legal system.
- If there is the ability for them to have a hands-on experience, then afford them that opportunity.
- Let your employees talk to them and let them address your employees.
- Make time to talk to them substantively about your resource/policy issues and provide them with specific ways they can resolve not only current issues but projected issues due to the ever-increasing caseload.
- Provide them a packet to take back to the office (*see attached documents to provide to the policymaker*).

Organizing Principles for Talking Points

Keep It Brief. Keep it Memorable. Keep it Meaningful!

Brief: Allows the message to be easy to remember. To make your messages both succinct and scalable, we recommend organizing them around 3 key points (words/phrases) that can function as an outline (see attached sample). This then becomes your scaffolding upon which to build your broader message.

Memorable: Give them cues to make it easy to remember you. Use stories, visuals, or analogies to present complex information in an easy, memorable format...MAKE IT LOCAL.

Meaningful: How is your work meaningful to you in a way that can be conveyed with passionate enthusiasm? But it should also be meaningful to your audience and what matters to them.

STEP FOUR: Send a Thank You Letter and brief summary

After the meeting, follow up with a thank-you e-mail that repeats the main message and expresses a willingness to provide information or assistance in the future. Meetings are a way to build a long-term relationship and Thank You letters can serve as an opportunity to emphasize your willingness to work with staff over the long term — not just when you want something.

Prepare a Meeting Summary- Prepare a summary of your meeting: who participated; with whom you met; topics discussed; questions raised; what was answered and what was not; and any follow-up planned or completed. (SEE CFSO TOOLKIT).

CFSO is here to answer any questions you have. Please contact your CFSO Rep ([link](#))

TEMPLATE 1: INVITING YOUR POLICYMAKER TO YOUR LAB OR OFFICE

Sample Meeting Request Letter

DIRECTIONS: Use the sample letter below as a guide for drafting your own meeting request to your Members of Congress. Please remember to **E-MAIL** meeting requests to your Representative and/or Senator's office whenever possible. **Call and ask for the contact information of the Member's scheduler.** Due to heightened security, it can take up to a month for Members to receive letters sent via mail.

(DATE)

[To a Representative]
The Honorable **(full name)**
U.S. House of Representatives
(District Office Address)

[To a Senator]
The Honorable **(full name)**
United States Senate
(State/District Office Address)

Dear **(Representative or Senator) (last name):**

On behalf of **(lab/office name)** located in **(name of community)** in your **(state/district)**, I am writing to request the opportunity to meet with you while you are back in **(state/district)** during National Forensic Science Week, September **(dates)** or at a time convenient to you and your staff.

Personalize here: introduce yourself, your office, and summarize offices in the congressional district or state. **Example:** I am the Crime Lab Director/Medical Examiner/Coroner/Other of the State/City/other of **(fill in)**, whose office handles approximately # of cases per year. Describe what work your lab does, how many people work for your lab and what types of work are done in your lab/office to assist in justice.

During our meeting with you, we would like to talk about how we perform the work that **(name of lab/office)** conducts in your community every day, and how these investments benefit our common constituents. We would also like to explain how the federal budget decisions being contemplated in Washington, D.C. affect organizations like **(name of lab/office)** and provide you a tour of our facility.

I will contact your **(name of community where Member's office is located)** office to confirm receipt of this letter and to speak with your scheduler about a specific meeting date and time. Thank you in advance for the opportunity to meet with you.

Sincerely,

(your name and POC, office name, mailing address, email, and telephone number)

TEMPLATE 2: SAMPLE MEETING AGENDA/SCHEDULE

1. Greet Policymaker and staff at the door
 - a. Put up a Welcome Sign with names
 - b. Have refreshments available
2. Provide schedule of visit
 - a. 15 mins in Board Room with Leadership
 - b. 15 min Tour of facility
 - i. Demonstrations
 - ii. Hands On efforts
 - c. 15 minute+ Staff gather for comments from Policymaker
 - d. Departure (make sure to provide folder in toolkit)

DOWNLOADABLE PACKET TO GIVE TO POLICY MAKERS AND STAFF

Agenda/Schedule ([Template](#))

- FY27 Budget Priorities for Forensic Science, Death Investigation and Public Health Data System ([Link](#))
- WHITE PAPERS
 - [DOI Forensic Needs Assessment](#)
 - [AFIS and Interoperability](#)
 - [Coverdell Grant Program](#)
 - [Emerging Technologies](#)
 - [MEC Priorities](#)
 - [Grants available and status \(see chart\)](#)
 - [NamUs](#)
 - [Carla Walker Act](#)
 - [Backlog Justice Act](#)
 - [Strengthening the Medical Examiner Coroner Act](#)
 - [CODIS Access white paper](#)