

NACo Advocacy Toolkit

Congress in Your Community: A County Official's Guide to In-District Engagement

Why it Matters

Congressional recesses — officially called “district work periods” — are windows when Members are in their home districts and states. For county officials, this is an opportunity to showcase your county’s work, connect federal policy to local reality and build the relationships that sustain advocacy year-round. **This toolkit helps county officials make the most of those windows — from requesting meetings and hosting site visits to staying engaged long after the recess ends.**

Know the Landscape

DC Office vs. District Office

Every Member operates offices in Washington and back home. The DC office handles legislation and floor votes — schedules are competitive and staff-heavy. The **district office** handles constituent services and local outreach and is far more accessible during recesses. Your key contact is the **District Director** — the Member’s top local liaison, and a relationship worth cultivating.

- **DC office:** Structured legislative asks, NACo fly-ins, D.C. meetings during session
- **District office:** Site visits, local storytelling, relationship-building, recess meetings

Make First Contact

How to Request a Meeting or Site Visit

Find your Member’s district office via their official website or NACo’s Grassroots Advocacy webpage. Send a brief, clear email stating who you are, what you’d like to discuss and your proposed format.

- Request **30 minutes** and offer multiple date options
- If the Member isn’t available, ask to meet with a **district staffer**
- **Contact NACo** Government Affairs — we can help identify contacts, suggest resources and align your outreach with broader county advocacy

Choose your Format

Site Visits vs. In-Office Meetings

Site visits are ideal when you have something to show — a bridge, an emergency operations center, a housing development. They create memorable, visual context that no briefing document can replicate, and allow county staff and residents to speak directly to impact.

In-office meetings are more flexible and easier to schedule. They work well for legislative asks, introductory conversations or when your issue is policy-specific rather than place-specific.

A mix of both over time is the most effective approach. Start with an office meeting; follow up with a site visit invitation.

Keep the Momentum

Staying Engaged After your Meeting

A single meeting or site visit is a starting point, not a finish line.

- Send a thank-you within 48 hours, restating your ask and any promised materials
- Share updates when something changes — a project breaks ground, a bill moves or a funding decision affects your county
- Extend invitations celebratory board events, ribbon cuttings and community events
- Celebrate wins publicly when a Member supports a county priority — positive reinforcement builds the relationship
- Report back to NACo so we can reinforce your message on Capitol Hill

Get the Full Toolkit



Scan the QR code for meeting request email templates, a complete 2026 congressional recess calendar, a full site visit planning guide and tips for sustained engagement. For more information about grassroots advocacy, visit the NACo Grassroots Advocacy Hub or contact NACo Associate Director for Grassroots and Legislative Advocacy, Naomi Freel, at nfreel@naco.org or 202-942-4237.

Be Prepared

Tips for Success

- **Define your ask** — one to two specific, actionable requests per meeting
- **Bring a county fact sheet** — population, budget and issue-specific data, which you can use NACo County Explorer to find
- **Prepare your local story** — your residents are their constituents too, so make resident impact a key part of your conversation
- **Treat staff meetings seriously** — district staff advise and brief the Member directly
- **For site visits:** let the site tell its story and have a one-pager ready to hand off
- **For office meetings:** arrive early, be conversational rather than presentational and take notes

The Bottom Line

Why In-District Engagement Works

When Members of Congress are back in their districts, they're more accessible and more attuned to what's happening on the ground. A meeting at the district office or a site visit to a county facility isn't just a chance to make an ask — it's a chance to show off how federal legislation impacts your county's work and build the kind of ongoing relationship that makes you true intergovernmental partners.

Show up during recess. Schedule a meeting. Keep in touch. That sustained presence, combined with your local expertise, is how grassroots advocacy happens.