

NACo GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY SERIES — PART 2

In-District Advocacy During Congressional Recess

Naomi Freel

Associate Director, Grassroots & Legislative Advocacy
nfreel@naco.org

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Where We Left Off — and Where We're Headed



Part 1 Recap

- Exploring NACo's new Grassroots Advocacy Hub
 - Identifying your congressional delegation and potential county coalition partners
 - Using County Explorer data in your advocacy
 - Defining your policy ask
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Today's Focus

NACo's new toolkit:

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

- Defining a District Office versus a Capitol Hill Office
- Requesting district meeting or site visit
- Making the most of the August & October recess windows
- Turning one good meeting into a lasting relationship

Agenda

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Why Engage at Home

The recess opportunity

02

DC vs. District Offices

Who to contact & when

03

Requesting the Meeting

Step-by-step process + template

04

Site Visits vs. Office Meetings

Choosing the right format

05

Before, During & Day-Of Checklist

Prep & execution checklists

06

Calendar, Follow-Up & Staying Engaged

Timing it right + Q&A

Why Engage at Home?

Congressional recesses — officially “state work periods” or “district work periods” — are windows when members return home and are far more accessible than in Washington.



Bring the conversation to your turf

Showcase what counties do every day, on the ground where it happens.



Connect federal policy to local reality

Turn an abstract bill into a concrete, visible impact.



Build a lasting relationship

One that sustains advocacy all year — not just during a fly-in.



New to This?

Already done a D.C. fly-in? This guide is the perfect complement. First-timer? It's often the easiest place to start.

Recess = Access at home.

The core idea to carry into today's session.

D.C. Office vs. District Office

	Washington, D.C. Office	District / State Office
Focus	Legislation, floor votes, committee hearings	Constituent services, casework, local outreach
Best Time	While Congress is in session	Year-round — especially during recess
Who You'll Meet	Legislative staff & policy aides	District director & often the member
Best For	Structured legislative asks, D.C. fly-ins	Site visits, local storytelling, relationship-building

Focus your recess energy on the district office — it's where members are most reachable and relationship-building happens fastest.

Step 1: Find the Right Office Location



Many members represent large geographic areas with multiple state or district offices. Identify the office closest to your county.

1

Look up your delegation

Use NACo's Grassroots webpage to find your representative or senator.

2

Visit their official website

Navigate to their site to see all in-district office locations.

A Common, Effective Sequence

Use a mix of meeting types with each office over time to bolster engagement.



1. Start: In-Office Meeting

Establish the relationship and make your formal ask.



2. Follow-Up: Site Visit

Invite them back during a later recess to see it in action.

Alternative: If you have a compelling project ready now, lead with the site visit — and use the visit itself as the setting for a more formal ask.

Step 2: Site Visit vs. In-Office Meeting



Site Visit

- Physically shows programs in action
- Creates memorable, visual context
- Lets residents & staff speak to impact directly
- Photo & social opportunities

BEST FOR

Roads/bridges, disaster sites, health & human services facilities, broadband, housing, libraries, airports, public lands

In-Office Meeting

- Efficient for multiple issues in one sitting
- Easier to schedule on short notice
- Room for data, briefs & printed materials
- Works well when meeting with staff

BEST FOR

Legislative asks, bill co-sponsorship, funding requests without a visible site, follow-ups & introductory meetings

Step 3: Send a Clear, Concise Request

Three short paragraphs. Who you are, what you want to discuss, and when you're available.

- ✓ Your name, title & county
- ✓ Population / district context
- ✓ 1–2 specific issues to discuss
- ✓ Meeting format (office visit or site visit)
- ✓ 2–3 date/time options

TEMPLATE: MEETING REQUEST EMAIL

Subject: Meeting Request - [Title, Name, County]

Dear [District Staffer's Name],

My name is [Your Name], and I serve as [Title] for [County], home to [population] residents. I'm writing to request a meeting with [Member] while they are in-district for the upcoming work period.

I'd welcome the chance to discuss [one or two specific issues]. [Optional: invite them to visit a specific project.]

I'm available [dates/times]. I can be reached at [phone/email].

Sincerely,
[Your Name], [Title], [County]

Step 4: Scheduling Best Practices



Keep it to 30 minutes for meetings or 45 minutes for a site visits

Enough time for your message and conversation — respectful of a busy schedule.



Be flexible on participants

If the member can't meet, a district staffer is a strong second — better than no meeting.



Follow up

No response in a week? A follow-up call or email is entirely appropriate.



Coordinate with NACo

Government Affairs staff can help identify contacts, flag priorities, and suggest data & materials.

Before the Meeting or Site Visit



Define your ask

One to two specific, actionable requests — co-sponsor, support funding, oppose a change.



Research their priorities

Review committee assignments & recent statements; frame your issue around genuine overlap.



Prepare a one-pager

Population, budget, key services, and a data point on your issue. **County Explorer helps.**



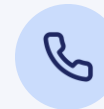
Prepare your local story

Numbers open doors; stories close deals. Have one concrete, real example ready.



Brief your team

Who leads, who covers talking points, who takes notes.



Connect with NACo Government Affairs

We share national positions, policy context, and help think through talking points.

If You're Hosting a Site Visit

- **Choose the right location** — tells a story quickly and visually
- **Keep the agenda tight** — 30–45 minutes is ideal
- **Let the site tell its own story** — show, don't tell
- **Involve county staff or residents** — firsthand impact persuades
- **Consider a media & social media plan** — be sure to get sign-off from your MOC's office if you do plan to post or share with a news organization
- **Have materials ready to hand off at the end**

Ideal Sites

- A bridge in need of repair
- An emergency communications center
- A housing development
- A new community center
- A county-owned hospital
- A county jail

If You're Attending an In-Office Meeting



Arrive early, leave on time

5–10 minutes early. If running over, offer to wrap up gracefully — it builds goodwill.



Open with who you are

A clear intro — name, role, county, and what you plan to discuss.



Be conversational, not presentational

Speak like a knowledgeable colleague. Bring notes as reference, not a script.



Listen actively

Engage with concerns directly. Offer to follow up with info you don't have on hand.

Reminder: staff meetings matter just as much — staff report back to the member and shape their recommendations.

Day-Of Checklist

-  Confirm meeting time, location & attendee list the morning of (or day before)
-  Bring printed one-pagers and county data
-  Bring business cards for all attendees
-  Bring something to take notes
-  Know your primary ask in one sentence
-  Plan to send a thank-you and follow-up within 24 hours

Plan Your Meeting: Key 2026 Recess Windows

The 119th Congress, 2nd Session runs through the end of 2026. Two windows matter most for in-district advocacy:



Summer Recess

AUGUST

The longest stretch of the year — members are home for over a month. Ideal for site visits, meetings and community events.

Exact dates vary by chamber.



Election Recess

OCTOBER

Members are in campaign mode, but constituent engagement is high. Connecting county priorities to local voter concerns can be especially effective.

Exact dates vary by chamber.

Note: schedules are subject to change based on legislative activity, and members may have personal or official travel during recess. Always confirm availability directly.

A Meeting Is a Starting Point, Not a Finish Line

Send a thank-you within 24–48 hours: restate your ask, include follow-up materials, and leave the door open.



Share updates

New project, funding decision, or bill movement — a brief note keeps staff informed.



Keep the ask alive

Check in every few weeks during active legislative periods — outcomes come from sustained engagement.



Extend invitations

Board meetings, ribbon cuttings, emergency drills — each visit builds the relationship.



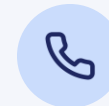
Leverage social media

Tag the member (with permission) when your county achieves a shared policy win.



Celebrate wins

If they vote for a priority or fund a project — thank them publicly. It reinforces the relationship.



Report back to NACo

Tell us how it went, what you heard, and any commitments made — we'll reinforce it in D.C.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Show Up. Schedule It. Keep in Touch.

- 1 Recess is your best window — members are more accessible at home than in D.C.
- 2 Lead with a clear, specific ask — vague requests don't move people to action.
- 3 Match the format to your goal — site visit to show, office meeting to discuss.
- 4 The relationship outlasts the meeting — consistent follow-up is what wins outcomes.

Your next step: identify your recess-window meeting target this week.

Take the Toolkit Home With You

Full Toolkit

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



Related Resources

- D.C. companion guide: From Counties to Congress — Your Guide to Federal Policy Advocacy in Washington
- County Grassroots Advocacy Hub
- County Explorer — data for your one-pager



Contact NACo Government Affairs

We help identify contacts, flag priority recess opportunities, and prep your talking points.

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Questions? Let's discuss.