NPMA
National Pest Management Association

NPMA GRASSROOTS RESOURCES

HOW TO CONDUCT AN IN DISTRICT MEETING

Now that you've set up an in district meeting, you need to be prepared to conduct it. You may have scheduled this yourself or you may be going in with a group and need to plan how to split the time. This guide will walk you through how to conduct an in district meeting with a group of any size.

Before the Meeting

When to arrive: A good rule of thumb is to arrive ten minutes early, as this gives you a cushion of time if you get lost. Make sure to allow plenty of time to park near the office. Make sure that you have your one pagers or other handouts ready, as well as a business card for the receptionist.

- **With a group?** Decide beforehand who will speak on which topics in what order. Everyone may not get a chance to speak in every meeting and that's OK. Determine who the meeting lead is; this person should function almost like an MC and make sure conversation keeps flowing. This is generally the constituent or someone who has conducted meetings before.

Checking In: About 5 minutes before the meeting, you can check-in with the front desk. Hand them your business card and say who you are, who you're meeting with, and the time of your appointment. For example, *"I'm Jane Doe, and I'm here for my 11 AM appointment with John Smith."* They will offer to let you sit down and/or offer you water. Feel free to accept or decline.

- **With a group?** Send the person who made the appointment in to check-in. Let the receptionist know if all the group has arrived.
- **With a large group?** Let the receptionist know you're happy to wait in the hallway or outside until the staffer is ready, so as not to crowd the office.

At the Meeting

Introductions: Once the staffer has led you to the meeting room and everyone is seated, take a moment and thank the staffer(s)/Member for taking the time to meet with you. You should briefly introduce yourself and explain any district connection. For example: *"My name is John Doe and I'm with JD Pest Control. We have 3 locations in your district where we employ 15 constituents."* It is important to note if you employ anyone or do work in the district. If not, you can emphasize any state connections. Make sure you have enough business cards to give one to each staffer in each meeting you attend.

- **With a group?** The meeting lead should introduce him/herself first, and then in order of seating, everyone should go around the room and do the same. Keep your introduction very short, as it is eating into your time. If you're tagging along with a group and don't have presence in the district and/or the state, it's fine to just say your name, company, and the state(s) you do business in.

Tailor Your Talking Points: Once introductions are finished, you can focus on the issue(s) you came to discuss. Keep in mind staffers may handle a vast portfolio and can be anywhere between an expert and totally unaware of your issue. It is recommended that you ask something similar to the following before beginning; *"I don't know how familiar you are with [insert issue] so I before I dive into the details, I wanted to check and see if you've worked on this issue before?"* Staffers that are familiar with the issue will tell you so, and those that aren't can say they don't know much about it. This will allow you to tailor your level of detail to their needs. <u>You should never shame them for a lack of knowledge or imply that they should know something about your issue.</u> Staffers juggle dozens of active policy issues at a time, so it's important to remember we are meeting with them to educate them, not to judge their lack of understanding.

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The Issues: Now that you know what level of knowledge a staffer has, it's time to discuss the details. When talking about an issue you should:

1. Hand them the one pager for the issues, and if needed, provide 3–4 sentences on the history of the issue. If the staffer indicates they know the issue well, you can skip or condense the background.
2. Explain in 1–3 sentences what the problem is.
3. Give 1–2 sentences about how it affects you or businesses in the industry directly.
4. Explain what solution you are proposing in 1–2 sentences.
5. Ask them their thoughts.

As you can see, this does not call for a long explanation. It is better to lay the basics out first and allows the staffer to ask questions and engage in a dialogue. Talking at a staffer for 20 minutes will not be nearly as productive as talking with a staffer for 10. If they ask questions you do not know the answer to, write them down and let them know when you'll follow up. For example, if they ask you if this issue is included in appropriations, you could say *"I'm not sure, but I/NPMA will follow up with you later this week to confirm."* Repeat this process as needed for each issue.

- **With a group?** Pick one person to cover each issue. When it comes to questions, anyone can chime in but in order to move the meeting along, it is best to have one person to explain each issue.

Ending the Meeting: When you've covered the issue(s) and have exhausted the discussion, you can thank the staffer(s)/Member for their time and offer to be a resource for any future questions. Make sure you have a card from the staffer and have written down any questions you need to follow up on. Walk a good distance outside the building before discussing the meeting so your commentary doesn't carry.

After the Meeting

Follow-up: Make sure that you send an email to each staffer you met with, personally thanking them for meeting with you/your group. If there were any questions you were unable to answer in person, make sure you follow up with the information, looping in NPMA staff as needed.

General Notes

Do Not:

- **Lie:** Passing along bad information will irrevocably damage your relationship with the staffer and will impact their impression of NPMA. If you don't know the answer, just say you will find out.•Offer a contribution: Either to the staffer for their boss or by implying your contribution is tied to a vote. Both are strictly prohibited and will cause the meeting to end.
- **Be Disrespectful:** You will likely take a difficult meeting at some point. Perhaps the staffer disagrees with your point of view or may even be rude to you. Always remember to be professional, and if you feel like the meeting is unproductive, you can cut it short by saying "Thank you so much for your time, I understand we may disagree on some things but I hope you'll take a look over our one pagers and let us know if we can be helpful in any way."
- **Run Over Your Time:** Meetings are set in 30-minute blocks, and you should aim for about 15–20 minutes per meeting. If you have a large group perhaps it runs to 25, but unless explicitly told by the staffer to stay longer, you need to wrap up at about the 25-minute mark. If meeting with a Member, meetings may be set in as little as 15minute blocks; make sure to clarify with the scheduler in advance of the meeting how long you will have.
- **Be on your cell phone during a meeting:** If you find yourself needing to answer an urgent email or call, then you can wait in the hallway to do so while the rest of the group takes the meeting. Please be respectful of the staffer's/Member's time and focus on them while in the room.•Assume that because a staffer looks young that they are incompetent: The average age of a House staffer is early 20s, and the average age of a Senate staffer is late 20s. Despite their young age, they hold a great deal of influence, so please do not imply that their youth makes them incompetent, or request to speak to someone older.
- **Most District offices have limited seating:** If you come with a large group you may be asked to stand or meeting outside. This is not a sign of disrespect.