

# Porter's Principles

## For Meetings with Members of Congress

Research!America's chair, **The Honorable John Edward Porter**, served in the U.S. Congress for 20 years. To help today's advocates, he has a few simple principles for developing a productive and long-lasting relationship with your congressional delegation.

### How To: Make an Appointment

- Request the meeting as soon as possible, but no more than a month in advance.
- When calling or e-mailing an office, ask for the scheduler's name so you can address them directly.
- Send the meeting request according to their preference (fax, email, etc.) and include your complete contact information.
- Meeting requests should clearly state what issue or topic you wish to discuss so the scheduler can direct you to the appropriate staffer if your member of Congress is not available.
- If the member is not available, accept a meeting with the appropriate staff person.
- Follow-up by phone and e-mail to confirm the time.

### How To: Have a Successful Meeting in Your Member's Home/District or Washington Office

- Be prompt and patient.
  - Be on time and prepared to wait if needed.
- Start with a thank you.
  - Thank the member for their service to you as their constituent and for taking time to meet with you.
- Have a specific and singular request. Examples include:
  - Encourage your member to support specific legislation.
  - Ask your member to sponsor or endorse a "Dear Colleague" letter.
  - Invite members and their staff to come see where you work.
- Be brief.
  - Plan what you want to say and provide essential background information.
- Speak with passion and personalize the message.
  - Tell a story and make it relevant to the member.
- Follow-up.
  - Make sure to send a thank-you note that reinforces your request and includes any materials that might be useful to the member/staffer based on your meeting.



### John Porter's Advice for Meetings on Capitol Hill

**If your member of Congress is not available, plan a meeting with a member of their staff.**

**Treat staff as you would the member.**

**Staffers are highly influential, and members rely on their input.**

Congressional staffers:

- Research & monitor issues
- Advise the member
- Read & respond to constituent mail
- Meet with constituents
- Serve as gatekeepers
- Plan the member's schedules
- Schedule their own meetings

