



## NCSSSMST Capitol Hill Advocacy Day for STEM Education Wednesday, March 11, 2009



[www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov)

The following handout will help your school delegation plan an exciting and educational day on Capitol Hill. Please do not hesitate to contact **Melissa Schoeplein, AP Government Teacher and NCSSSMST Board Member at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology** if you need any more advice or assistance in arranging your visit to Capitol Hill. We look forward to hearing about your day on the Hill at the Professional Conference opening reception Wednesday night at the Marriott Crystal Gateway Hotel!

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### Arranging Your Visit to Capitol Hill:

1. Identify your members of Congress by identifying your school's congressional district and the district(s) your students live in. If you are a state sponsored school, you may also want to visit your U.S. Senators' offices. Use the following websites to get the most up to date contact information about your members of Congress:

<http://www.house.gov/>

[http://www.senate.gov/general/contact\\_information/senators\\_cfm.cfm](http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm)

2. Contact the congressional offices to arrange an appointment for Wednesday, March 11<sup>th</sup> as soon as you can. It is best to make contact via phone or email since postal mail must go through security testing and could take over a month to reach the desk of the right person. Be sure to identify yourself, your school, the reason for your visit, and the number of people in your group. Be clear if you are seeking a meeting, a tour, a photo with the member, or all of the above. You may be directed to speak to a specific staff member ("legislative assistant" or "scheduler") about your visit. Keep track of the name and contact information of your main contact so you can follow up a week before the

visit to verify your appointment and inquire about any changes (if you are fortunate enough to get an appointment with the actual member of Congress, their schedule does often change depending on other meetings or hearings they have that day).

### How to Prepare and What to Bring:

- You may wish to bring some information about your school (a fact sheet, brochure, or photos of students). However, do not overwhelm the members or staffers with a lot of literature or school gear.
- Be prepared! Establish in advance your agenda and goals: what subjects do you wish to address, what do you want to get out of the visit, and also establish who in your group will start the discussion. NCSSSMST will also create and make available to you a STEM Education Policy talking points memo to assist you in the meeting. This will be available on the Professional Conference website in February 2009.
- Be sure to do your homework before you arrive, although know that most elected officials are generalists and rely on staff members to develop expertise in particular policy areas. To find out more about your members and their committee assignments preview their website. To learn about their voting record on issues consult <http://thomas.loc.gov>
- Bring business cards to exchange.
- Dress professionally: Washington, DC is not a casual place.

### What to Expect:

- Be sure to allow enough time to get from the Metro to your office building. The city blocks on Capitol Hill are long blocks. Also allow time for metal detectors and security lines in the office buildings. Security guards can be helpful in locating a specific office. Building layout maps and signs are also posted in all buildings after the security check point.
- Arrive a few minutes early before your appointment, but also be prepared to wait.
- You will probably meet with a staffer (typically mid-20s to mid-30s), not the actual legislator. Staff members, however, can be important allies.
- Ask for a business card before you leave so you can follow up with a thank you note.

### How to get to Capitol Hill:

Most likely your appointment will be in one of the House or Senate Office Buildings. The office location will be identified on your member's website. House Office Buildings (Rayburn, Longworth, and Cannon) are located on Independence Avenue and Senate Office Buildings (Russell, Dirksen, and Hart) are located on Constitution Avenue. Consult the following map to plan your visit:

[http://www.aoc.gov/cc/cc\\_map.cfm](http://www.aoc.gov/cc/cc_map.cfm)

If you are coming from the Hotel: <http://www.wmata.com/metrorail/systemmap.cfm>

The Blue Line is the closest Metro to the Conference hotel. Once you connect with the Metro system, consult a map and make your way to Capitol Hill South on the Orange or Blue Line (best for meetings on the House side) or Union Station on the Red Line (best for meetings on the Senate Side).

If you are coming from Reagan National Airport, Washington Dulles International Airport, or Baltimore Washington International Airport:  
<http://www.wmata.com/metrorail/systemmap.cfm>

Once you connect with the Metro system, consult a map and make your way to Capitol Hill South on the Orange or Blue Line (best for meetings on the House side) or Union Station on the Red Line (best for meetings on the Senate Side). Note: Taxi service to Capitol Hill from Reagan National would be about \$20 and a taxi from Dulles would be about \$50.

### What else can I do on the Hill while I'm up there?

- Visit the U.S. Capitol and the new U.S. Capitol Visitor Center (opened December 2008). For guided tours consult this website or request a private from your congressional office. [www.visitthecapitol.gov](http://www.visitthecapitol.gov) and [www.aoc.gov](http://www.aoc.gov)
- Attend a committee meeting in a House or Senate office building (Note: You do not need to attend the entire meeting or be there when it starts to get in---just slip in and out quietly. This is one of the best ways to see "government in action." Also, some meetings have lines to get in. For an up to date list of committee meetings consult [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) and [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) or the "A" section of the *Washington Post* and *Washington Times* the day of your visit)
- Visit the Supreme Court: <http://www.supremecourtus.gov/>
- Visit the Library of Congress: <http://www.loc.gov/index.html>
- Eat lunch in a Hill cafeteria. Options: Supreme Court cafeteria, Senate Cafeteria (basement of Dirksen), House cafeteria (basement of Rayburn)
- Visit the Folger Shakespeare Library: <http://www.folger.edu/>
- Visit museums close to Capitol Hill: The Newseum <http://www.newseum.org/> and the Smithsonian Museums <http://www.si.edu/>
- Visit the U.S. Botanical Gardens: <http://www.usbg.gov/>

### What to do after your Day on Capitol Hill

- Be sure to send a thank you note or email to each office you visit. In the note, remind them what the visit was about and any definite actions that they said they would take. Be sure to also invite them to visit your school next time they are in the area.
- Please also send Melissa Schoeplein an email summarizing your experience and provide feedback to NCSSSMST about the day: [Melissa.Schoeplein@fcps.edu](mailto:Melissa.Schoeplein@fcps.edu)

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**Enjoy your trip to Washington, DC!**