1. **Identify your members of Congress.** If you don’t already know who represents your state and district in the United States Congress, you can find that information online via [Contacting the Congress](http://www.contactingthecongress.org/). Simply go to [http://www.contactingthecongress.org/](http://www.contactingthecongress.org/) and either plug in your zip code or click on your state to find contact information for your members of Congress. You will find general information about your Representative and Senators, including a link to their web site, and contact information for both their district and Washington, DC offices.

2. **Find the way your member of Congress prefers to take meeting requests.** Some members of Congress will take requests by fax or over the phone, while others will take requests for a meeting via their web page. To find out what works best for your member of Congress, go to his/her web page to see what information he/she provides.

   - In your meeting request, provide some brief background information on why you want to meet with your representative and when (June 21st). Be sure to mention that you are representing your state affiliate (and if appropriate, that you are a constituent).

3. **After several days, follow up the request with a phone call.** When you call, ask for the office scheduler. When you reach the scheduler, introduce yourself, identify yourself as a constituent or representing your state affiliate, and let he or she know that you are following up on a request to schedule a meeting. Be sure to let the scheduler know when you sent your request, and the issue you would like to discuss.

   - The demands upon Congressional staff are great, so you may not reach the scheduler on your first try. Leave a message with your phone number and the reason for your call. If the scheduler does not return your call by the next day, try again the following day. Be patient and persistent – it may take several calls before you are able to set the meeting time. *Don’t give up!*

4. **Determine meeting logistics.** Discuss with the scheduler the time and location of the meeting. Members of Congress and their staffs are extremely busy, so most meetings are scheduled in 15-minute increments.

   - Please bear in mind that depending upon your representative’s schedule, you may not meet with your member of Congress directly. Members of Congress depend upon their staff, so if you speak to the right aide you have the ear of the representative!

5. **Tell the scheduler you will be calling again to reconfirm the meeting.** Once the meeting time is set, let him/her know that you will be calling to reconfirm a week before the meeting. Be sure to mark the meeting time and location in your schedule and submit it to David Cutler by June 17th.
Additional Tips

- **Bring or create business cards.** You might be asked for your card after a meeting. Business cards are also a great/easy way to leave your contact information with your representative’s office.

- **When scheduling consecutive meetings, try to cluster your meetings together.** The House of Representatives and the Senate have their offices on opposite sides of the U.S. Capitol, so try to cluster your meetings together (e.g. Senate meetings, then House meetings).
  
  o If you will be having more than one meeting in a particular building (e.g. Rayburn House Office Building), try to group all those meetings together.

- **Be sure to leave plenty of time to go from one meeting to the next.** Leave at least 30 minutes between the end of one meeting and the beginning of the next. This is especially important if you will have to leave one building to get to another and go through security. If you are going from the House to the Senate (or vice-versa), add another 15 minutes to leave plenty of time to cross the Capitol.

- **Consider starting with a friendly audience.** If you will be meeting with legislators that have historically not been supportive to your issues, you may want to schedule meetings with legislators who have been supportive first. It might help you ease into your meetings and let you “practice” for a tougher meeting.

- **Try to coordinate your meetings with other summit attendees from your state and/or Congressional District.** There is power in numbers and this will also allow you to brainstorm different points and issues to bring before your representative. Be sure to check out the summit community group to communicate with other attendees to plan your meetings and prepare.

- **If you are with a group, assign someone to serve as the moderator/leader during your visit.** Work together and be organized! Know what you want to say and how you want to say it.
  
  o Plan your appointment time like you would plan for a workshop—quilt it together/put things in order. Go in with hooks to hang your stories on.
    
    ▪ Who we are in and what we do
    ▪ How we go above and beyond using our funding (our reach)
    ▪ See for yourself! (Invitation to a local program or other event)
    
    ▪ Be sure to connect your work to your program or community. Legislators value your thoughts as a constituent. They rely on local stories and sources for their own work.

- **Establishing relationships with legislative staff is key.** Encourage the education aide to use you as a resource in your area of expertise. If you do not know the answer to a question, offer to get the information and send it to the aide after your meeting. Remember: the goal is to educate!

After Your Visits

- Your appointment is not the only opportunity you have to talk to your senator or representative. Send success stories, media clips, and updates all year long, and consider inviting legislative staff to visit your school or program.

- Send a thank-you email after your appointment to express your appreciation and to reinforce any commitments made during the meeting. Remember to honor any requests you made in the meeting, such as providing more information.

- Send an email to advocacy@tesol.org and let TESOL International Association know how your meeting went. Your visit will help in formulating the overall legislative strategy for the association.