



# National Indian Education Association

## Congressional Meeting Guidelines

### 2014 August Recess

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Meeting with your member of Congress is one of the most common and effective forms of advocacy for Native education. As a voting constituent, your elected representatives are eager to meet with you and hear what you have to say. Please use this sheet to help you prepare for and conduct your meetings.

- Be on time, be prepared, and bring NIEA policy materials. Your time will be limited, so prepare talking points in advance and bring printed materials to leave behind as a resource for their office.
- Please take **no more than 3 people** to a meeting so that your message is clear and your group stays coordinated and on topic.
- Due to congressional schedules, most meetings are held with young staffers. They are often knowledgeable on their subject issue, but may hold little knowledge of Native education. Do not be insulted if you have to brief them on Native issues and the trust responsibility of the federal government.
- Arrive at a member's office calm, collected, and prepared. Business attire is considered the standard.
- Remember to relate your message to your congressional member by including something that is affecting your congressional district but **remember to get your point across**.
- If asked something you do not know, simply tell them you will follow up with them - or will have NIEA contact them – to answer the question.
- Regardless of their support for an issue, always leave the office with good demeanor even if you disagree. Remember, the primary purpose of these meetings is educating congressional offices on Native education.
- Make sure you leave your business card and NIEA policy papers with your congressional member or their staff as you depart from your meeting.
- Invite your congressional members to visit your tribe, Native community, or school: Suggest a tour of a new facility or invite them to speak at a local meeting. Members of Congress will welcome the opportunity to engage your local communities and Native students.
- Use the meeting as a photo opportunity: Take a picture with your representative at your school or community meeting. Use it in a newsletter or post it to a social media site to increase awareness.
- Be a local resource: Members of Congress frequently establish advisory panels (consisting of parents, teachers, administrators, etc.) to provide them with the local viewpoints on education policy initiatives. By serving on these panels, you will be in a good position to offer input.
- Please contact Clint J. Bowers, NIEA Policy Associate, at [cbowers@niea.org](mailto:cbowers@niea.org) to highlight your advocacy work or to address any questions or concerns you may have.