



Resource Guide: Organizing a Congressional Delegation

DECADES OF STRUGGLE by working people, COSH groups, unions, and worker centers have improved working conditions and made jobs safer. Virtually every safety and health protection on the books today is there because of working men and women who joined together to win these protections. Now more than ever it is important we strengthen that unity and defend our rights to safe and healthy workplaces.

The National COSH Network is mobilizing congressional delegations throughout the country to ensure safety and health protections for all workers are not weakened by the current administration. In addition, National COSH and its partners developed a policy platform outlining our shared principles called “Protecting Workers’ Lives and Limbs: A Call to Action”. We hope that you can join a delegation to send a message to our political representatives - we will defend our right to safe and healthy workplaces!

This guide is intended to help you set up and plan discussions with your representatives. Your legislators or their staff have an obligation to meet with constituents and they should welcome the opportunity to meet with all representatives in your delegation.

In this resource guide you will find:

- A guide on how to set up a meeting with your U.S. Representative or U.S. Senator
- Some suggested talking points for your delegation
- The policy platform “Protecting Workers’ Lives and Limbs: A Call to Action”

Why you are convening a delegation to meet with your Congressperson/Senator?

- The delegation itself is an opportunity to engage and mobilize a range of stakeholders and increase their commitment to workplace health and safety issues.
- Make clear - to the elected official - the diversity of constituents who have made worker health and safety a priority.
- Convey to the official some specific priorities that you want to make their priorities.
- Develop a relationship with your elected official (and his/her staffers) and let them know that worker health and safety advocates are keeping them accountable on the issues introduced and are looking for their support.

Who you are engaging in the delegation:

Some examples of who you can involve...

- Injured workers; Family members
- Union representatives
- Worker center representatives
- Young workers
- Occupational safety/health professionals
- Legal representative i.e. Lawyer, legal advocate

Remember to organize a prep meeting or conference call with the delegation to plan the congressional visit and agree on talking points.

How you can use the platform:

- Identify a few aspects of the platform that you think will be priorities for your delegation. These should be the issues that speak to your organization and the members of the delegation that attend the meeting.
- Talk about using any local examples of health and safety issues [i.e. fatalities, egregious employers, etc.] and the platform to generate discussion about priorities among the delegation.
- Along with 2 or 3 other priorities, you'll want to highlight how the training under the Susan Harwood grant has impacted workers in your state.

Tips for meeting with your with your elected official:

- Make sure your communication is simple, concise, and to the point. Often, it's helpful to have a lead person to introduce the delegation etc.
- Have an agenda so that you don't just chat until the clock runs out. Ask staff in advance how much time you will have and plan accordingly.

- Take a copy of Protecting Workers' Lives and Limbs: A Call to Action and/or a handout that summarizes the points discussed.
- Do not be disappointed if you only meet with staff. Staff members play a key role in advising elected officials.
- Be a good listener, even if the legislator disagrees with aspects of your position.
- Keep your talking points to a few facts and focus on stories and experiences from the diverse representatives in your delegation.
- Get contact information for everyone in the meeting and send a follow-up e-mail to document the issues raised in the meeting.

Document your delegation on social media:

A visit to your member of Congress or senator is a great opportunity to show your supporters and constituents that your COSH is active and involved in advocating for safer workplaces.

- Take some time to get a few pictures of your group during your visit, including a picture of the member of Congress, senator or staffer who is meeting with you.
- Add a short caption and share on your organization's social media – and your personal feeds, too.
- Please send pictures, with caption info to the National COSH communications team, so we can share news of your delegation around our network. Send to Roger@NationalCOSH.org and India@NationalCOSH.org.

HOW TO SET UP A MEETING WITH YOUR U.S. REPRESENTATIVE OR U.S. SENATORS

Here is how you can set up a meeting with one of your lawmakers the next time he or she is in your home district or state.

Step 1: IDENTIFY YOUR FEDERAL LEGISLATORS

You have three federal legislators: one U.S. Representative and two U.S. Senators. Here's how to find them:

For U.S. Representatives (you have one):

- Visit <http://www.house.gov/representatives/find/>
- Enter your ZIP code +4
- Go to your Representative's website and look for the contact information for their district office locations
- Find the district office closest to you – this is the office you want to visit.

For U.S. Senators (you have two):

- Visit http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm
- Look for the two U.S. Senators from your state
- Go to each Senator's website and look for the contact information for their district office locations
- For each Senator, find the district office closest to you – these are the offices you want to visit.

Step 2: CALL THE DISTRICT OFFICE CLOSEST TO YOU

Pick the lawmaker's office that is closest to your home. Always try to meet with the lawmaker. If the lawmaker is not available, ask to meet with the staff member who works on labor and safety issues. This staff member will report back to your lawmaker on how your meeting goes. Here's how to ask for a meeting:

By phone: Call the phone number of the lawmaker's district office that is closest to you, and ask to speak to the scheduler. Then say,

"Hello, my name is [YOUR NAME]. I am a constituent, and I would like to meet with [YOUR LAWMAKER'S NAME] while he/she is home on recess. When might I be able to do that

Sample email or letter requesting a meeting:

[Your name and address]

The Honorable [First name of legislator] [Last name of legislator]
[Lawmaker's district office address]

Attention: [Name of scheduler]

Dear [Representative or Senator] [Last name]:

I am your constituent and was asked by [name of scheduler you spoke with] to submit this request to meet with you in your [name of city where district office is located] office to discuss sentencing reform issues. I will be joined by [list of people who will be joining you, if any].

The best dates for me to meet are [fill in several dates and/or times]. I will contact you shortly regarding the possibility of scheduling this meeting. In the meantime, you can contact me at [phone number] or [email] if you have any questions.

Sincerely,
[Your Signature]

SOME TALKING POINTS FOR YOUR DELEGATION

Below are some suggested talking points you can use during your congressional delegation. However, you should feel free to develop talking points relevant to your local priorities and region. This may include stories of workers injured and/or killed in your region. In addition, feel free to provide a copy of the policy platform, *Protecting Workers' Lives and Limbs: A Call to Action*, to your local official.

OPENER:

- Express thanks for meeting with the delegation.
- Introduce the group (individually, if a small group).
- Provide BRIEF intro to your COSH group: who we are, what we do, and whom we represent.
- Tell why you are here and how your COSH group can offer their services to constituents of the elected official represents

QUICK TIP: Personal stories and experiences can be very powerful in conveying your message. It is important to modify your talking points to those stories and experiences, i.e. fatality, have a family member share the story of their loved one; if an injured worker participates, have the injured worker share his/her story. If union representative participates, he/she can share a situation from their union.

GENERAL TALKING POINTS:

- ❑ Every day, Americans and members of your district go to work and face risks that threaten their immediate and long-term health, cause injuries or, too often, result in death.
- ❑ On average, more than 13 U.S. workers die at work each and every day of the year. These workers never get a chance to return home to their families.
- ❑ We respect the dignity of all workers and believe that all workplaces are safer when everyone has rights on the job, regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual identity or immigration status.
- ❑ We need your support to defend OSHA to be more effective – and defend what has been accomplished
 - Our position is consistent: We believe legislators, regulators, prosecutors can and should do more to promote and enforce rigorous safety laws that protect workers.

- Thanks in large part to efforts of workers and advocates, there were significant regulatory accomplishments during past 8 years, including new rules limiting exposure to silica and beryllium and new rules that improve recordkeeping on illnesses and injuries.
 - These are important new rules that will save workers' lives.
 - On behalf of workers and families, we strongly believe these regulations should remain in place and be rigorously enforced.
 - Regarding the silica rule, the American Industrial Hygienists Association (AIHA) recently reported that its members who are helping large and small companies implement the new standards find that this regulation is practical and cost-effective. Workers can be protected for dangerous exposure to silica dust with current affordable technology.
 - The president's Executive Order requiring elimination of two existing regulations every time a new one is implemented is not consistent with sound public policy.
 - Regulations should be on the books if they:
 - 1) Implement federal law as passed by Congress
 - 2) Protect workers, consumers and our environment
 - 3) Are reasonable and cost-effective
 - We can't accept the logic that if workers are to be protected from a newly-recognized hazard – such as workplace violence – we then must give up protections against two previously recognized hazards – such as asbestos and silica dust.
- We advocate for the most vulnerable worker populations and standing up for immigrant and undocumented workers has always been an important part of our mission for National COSH, the COSH network, and allies.
- As advocates for workplace safety, we are concerned about recent statements and actions focused on immigrants to the United States – including the undocumented and those with valid green cards and visas from certain countries.
 - The United States is a nation of immigrants, and immigrant workers and entrepreneurs make valuable contributions to the U.S. economy.
 - There are now some eight million undocumented workers in the U.S. – five percent of the total workforce
 - Actions against these millions of workers – including workplace raids, detentions and deportations – will make our workplaces less safe.
 - When workers are less secure in their daily lives, they will be much less likely to report safety problems on the job, for fear of retaliation.
 - This will make our workplaces more dangerous for *all* workers, with a high cost in human lives – and an enormous cost to employers

- ❑ Cutting back on safety protections does not save money or make it “easier” to do business.
 - Injuries and fatalities on the job are of course very costly to workers and their families. Preventable incidents can cost workers their lives, their health, the quality of time they have to spend with their families.
 - But workplace injuries and fatalities are not cheap for employers either.
 - The National Academy of Social Insurance estimates workers comp alone costs the U.S. economy 98.1 billion per year.
 - When you include unreported injuries, illness, and all that is not covered by workers comp, the true cost is 2 to 3 times greater.

- ❑ Preserving funding and resources for worker training and education programs, such as the Susan Harwood Grant, is essential for the recognition, avoidance, and prevention of safety and health hazards in their workplaces and to inform workers of their rights and employers of their responsibilities under the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Act.

- ❑ **Closing question:** Now that you’ve heard from us, we’d like to hear from you...
 - What actions will you take, during this Congress, to make our workplaces safer and to reduce preventable illnesses, injuries and fatalities?