

How to Make Your Lobby Meeting Successful

NATIONAL LOBBY DAYS:

It's High Time
for Higher Grades

A+



STAND

A Student Anti-Genocide Coalition

a division of



Genocide
Intervention Network



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How to Make Your Lobby Meeting **SUCCESSFUL**

Always keep in mind your asks, your legislative goal for the meeting – ie, “Get Senator McConnell to Co-Sponsor S.831, the Sudan Divestment Authorization Act.” You want to leave with a position and commitment from their office. Always tactfully steer the meeting in the direction of your asks.

Your other goal is to begin building a relationship with the person you’re meeting with – most likely the Foreign Policy Legislative Assistant (FPLA). This staffer deals with many constituents on a day-to-day basis, and you want to differentiate yourself from them, by showing the FPLA that you are informed about what you’re asking for, that you’re reliable, and that will do whatever you can to help make his/her job easier. That way, s/he is not only more likely to listen to you now. S/he is also more likely to listen to you about important Darfur and anti-genocide legislation in the future.

Plan for your meeting to last 20 minutes or so.

Bring the following materials to the meeting:

- ✓ Your contact info
- ✓ One-pager on the genocide
- ✓ One-pager on your asks
- ✓ Copy of the bill, as appropriate
- ✓ Photos of events, letters from constituents, articles from local media about your chapter or other Darfur-related groups/events

Here’s a basic outline for your meeting.

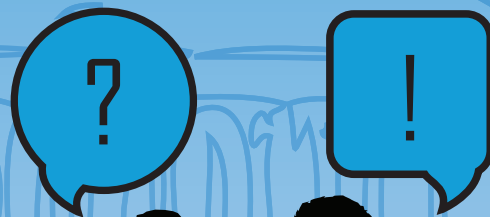
- **Introduce, and show why Darfur is important in your district/state**
 - >> When you introduce yourself, say that you are a constituent. Explain why stopping this genocide is important to you.
 - >> Show that you’re there representing many voters. Describe the group you represent as specifically as possible, including number of members. Include specific evidence that ending the genocide in Darfur is important to many constituents. Provide photos from any recent events you’ve held. Give them copies of articles or op-eds about Darfur from your local paper.
- **Thank**
 - >> Be sure to start off by thanking the elected official for any actions s/he has previously taken for the people of Darfur (find this info at www.DarfurScores.org). This is important because it lets them know that their constituents are keeping an eye on their Darfur record.
 - >> Make sure you know which committees the member of Congress sits on or other leadership positions s/he holds. This will help you frame your asks in a way that appeals to his/her interests.
- **Give background on the genocide**
 - >> It can be good to begin with a question – e.g., “How much do you know about what’s going on in Darfur?” Give a brief background on the genocide – consult STAND materials for more.

■ Asks

- >> Then, directly ask the elected official to take specific action, referencing existing legislation by bill number and name. This shows that you're not just there to express that you care about ending this genocide – you want to see them take specific actions to help stop it.
- >> Be sure you know the name, number, and sponsor of the bill/s you're talking about.
- >> Give them your sheet of asks.
- >> FPLA's are busy and have a lot of issues on their plate – so you want to make it as easy as possible for them to do what you're asking. For example, bring them a copy of the legislation you're talking about, noting the important sections.

■ Questions/Concerns

- >> If they seem hesitant to support what you're asking for, ask them directly what you can do to make this easier for them – do they need more info about the bill? More evidence that this is important to voters? Then, after the meeting, send them that info.
- >> The FPLA may try to get off topic by talking about other issues and accomplishments of his/her boss. Listen politely, thank them, and then get back on track. You can say something like, "That's great. I hope that Sen/Rep X can further demonstrate his/her commitment to his constituents by voting for this upcoming Darfur legislation."
- >> If you talk about DarfurScores, be tactful. Remember, you're trying to build a relationship, not alienate the staffer. If the member has a low grade, don't accuse him/her of not caring about Darfur. The best way of phrasing it is something like, "Recently, the nonprofit Genocide Intervention Network rated Senator McConnell as a D for his support for his Darfur legislation. Of course we know the Senator wants there to be an end to this genocide, and we hope that he can demonstrate that to his constituents by supporting this upcoming legislation."
- >> If you're asked a question that you don't know the answer to, say, "I don't have that information now, but I can get it to you." Then be sure to send it to them after the meeting.
- >> Remember to listen. While you always want to steer the conversation back to your asks, listening to the FPLA's concerns and priorities will help you meet them so they're more likely to want to work with you.
- >> Stay on topic, and be polite.



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FOLLOW-UP

- >> Leave with a clear understanding of what the FPLA's position is and what s/he will do (eg, "speak to my boss to see if he will vote for this legislation."). At the end of the meeting, schedule a good date and time when you can call to follow up. This way, you can ensure that they've done what you asked.
- >> Leave your contact info, and be sure to get their contact info too.
- >> Follow up! The lobby meeting is only the beginning. The most important part is the follow-up that you do afterwards, to establish a relationship between you and the FPLA.
- >> Send an email afterwards thanking him/her for the meeting, providing him/her with any materials you promised, and politely reminding him/her of the time for your phone call.
- >> Call the staffer at the time you scheduled. If s/he has done what you asked, thank him or her. Tell him/her that you will let the grassroots activists you're in touch with know about his/her actions. If s/he has not done what you asked, ask what you can do to make this happen. Consult with STAND's Advocacy team for assistance.
- >> Keep calling in the future. Provide him/her with information about key legislation, what's happening in Darfur, and what constituents are doing about Darfur in his/her boss's district. If you've established a relationship with this office, and they know they can count on you as a reliable source of information, they'll be that much more likely to listen to you when there is key anti-genocide legislation up for a vote in the future.

NOTES: