

American Library Association

Arrange a Congressional Visit of Your Library



1. **First, check the Congressional calendar and see when your member is at home.** Then call your Congressional member's district office and ask who handles their district meeting requests.

Ask if they prefer e-mail invitations or if they have a form on their website. Some schedulers prefer e-mail and some prefer appointment requests through their members' website. Follow their instructions exactly; some staffers will not respond or acknowledge your request if it is not in the correct format. It also important to be patient; due to the volume of meeting requests, many schedulers will not follow up on your request until two to three weeks prior to your meeting.

2. **Write your request and tailor it to your goals.** You may want to check the member's website and sign up for their e-newsletters so you can tailor the request to issues they have publicly mentioned.

3. **Once you are two to three weeks out, follow up with the scheduler** if they have not contacted you. Politely ask them about the status of your request, and offer to make scheduling the request as easy as possible.

4. **Due to time constraints**, sometimes it is not possible for your member to accept your request. In this case, you should invite a staffer to visit your library. Often times, they will enjoy the tour so much they will want their boss to see it.

5. **Once the meeting is set up**, start putting together materials for the visit. ALA can coordinate with you to make sure you have the materials you need. Members care about how long their constituents are waiting for a computer or what small business resources you have.

6. **Reach out to the member's staff** in case they have any questions beforehand—they may want to have some information prior to the meeting.

7. **Conduct the meeting.** Remember—your elected officials are obligated to listen to you. There is no need to feel intimidated! This is also a wonderful photo opportunity—do not forget to ask if they would like to take a picture inside the facility.

8. **After the meeting**, follow up with the staffer to ensure all their questions are answered. Consistent communication is key to building effective relationships. If they hear from you regularly, they will be more likely to listen to you when there is a priority legislative issue. Don't forget to say thank you for visiting!

ALA American Library Association 2020 Congressional Calendar

ALA Midwinter Meeting January 24-28, 2020
ALA Annual Conference June 25-30, 2020
ALA Congressional Fly-in February 10-11, 2020
National Library Legislative Day May 4-5, 2020

Legend: Both chambers in session (grey), Senate only in session (blue), House only in session (orange)

| Month | SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
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| JANUARY | | | | | | | |
| FEBRUARY | | | | | | | |
| MARCH | | | | | | | |
| APRIL | | | | | | | |
| MAY | | | | | | | |
| JUNE | | | | | | | |
| JULY | | | | | | | |
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| SEPTEMBER | | | | | | | |
| OCTOBER | | | | | | | |
| NOVEMBER | | | | | | | |
| DECEMBER | | | | | | | |

Contact the ALA Public Policy and Advocacy team at 800-941-6478 or alawash@alawash.org
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Download a copy of our 2020 Congressional calendar at <http://bit.ly/2020CongressionalCalendar>