

Special  
Education  
Legislative  
Summit **2022**  
July 10-13, 2022



## Anatomy of A Hill Visit

Or What the “Heck” Am I Doing in DC in July?!

# Words to Live By.....

“Let us never forget that government is ourselves and not an alien power over us. The ultimate rulers of our democracy are *not* a president and senators and congressmen and government officials, but the *voters* of this country.”



- *Franklin D. Roosevelt*

# And from Franklin's *Much* "Better Half!"

"Our children should learn the general framework of their government...and then they should know where they come in contact with the government, where it touches their daily lives, and where their influence is exerted on the government. It must not be a distant thing, someone else's business, but they must see how every cog in the wheel of a democracy is important and bears its share of responsibility for the smooth running of the entire machine."



-- Eleanor Roosevelt

# And Just as a Reminder.....



It is not only your **RIGHT** as a citizen to **VOTE** for the candidates of your choice....



It is also your **RESPONSIBILITY!**

This message was  
approved by Myrna  
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# What IS Congress?



- 535 small businesses!
- No “typical congressional office.”
- What are those “businesses” selling?  
(...and are you buying?)
- Can you influence your business’s “buyer?”

# How Business Gets Done

Congress often legislates by anecdote.

- Compelling stories prompt action.
- [#HearOurEdStories](#).

MoC need to hear from “home.”

- Power of constituency.

Congress is run by 20-somethings.

- They have smarts, power & influence, but not *your* expertise!

# Some Truths about MoC

- Reelection: Always running or getting ready to run!
  - Reps: Every two years.
  - Senators: Every six years.
- Only way to effect change is to stay in office...so “running” affects all actions! (No cynicism here!)
- AND midterm elections often critical – November 2022!
  - 435 House seats; 35 Senate seats (14 D; 21 R).
  - Also, FYI, 36 governorships (20 R; 16 D).



# Is Your MoC “Special?”



- The answer is “**Yes**” if your Rep or Senator is on –
  - House Education and Labor Committee.
  - Senate Health, Education, Labor & Pensions (HELP) Committee.
  - Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee (House or Senator) or full Appropriations Committee.
- Extra credit if Rep/Senator is chair or ranking member!



“ I really like my MoC.  
Do we need to meet?”

- **Yes!** but some Dos and Don'ts...
  - **Do** say “Thanks” and “Keep up the good work!” Let the staffer know you appreciate the office actions. The more praise for “good acts,” better the chance of “behavior” continuing!
  - **Don't** target other members who don't represent you. They don't care what “non-constituents” have to say!

# Who Cares About Staff? You do!



Staff members  
have....



Direct access  
to legislators.



Their bosses'  
trust.



Knowledge  
(sometimes!) on  
issue areas.



**INFLUENCE** over  
legislators'  
decisions and  
actions!

# Pet Peeves from Staffers



Being intentionally misleading.



Not researching MoC and community.



Making assumptions based on “hearsay” about staff or MoC.



Referring to MoC by first name (unless you really know them), even if staff does.



Droning on too long....!

# Takeaways

Getting to know staff can be very beneficial.

- Access to power structure.
- Capacity to influence decisions.

You do NOT have to be in DC to develop relationships.

- Work with district/state staff.
- Meet with DC staff when they're "at home."

This visit to DC is just ONE STEP in a long advocacy adventure!

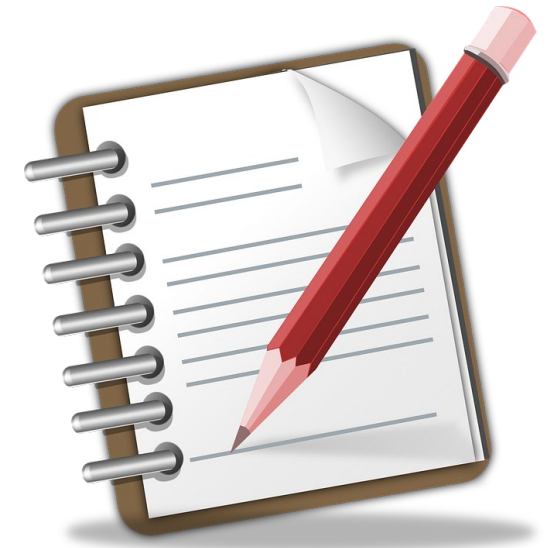
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# Taking Action: Becoming a Special Education Advocate

# BEFORE You Meet: Your Homework!

- Which party and “wing” of that party?
- Legislator’s prior record?
- Committee assignments?
- Is your issue favored by constituents? By the legislator?
- Helpful personal information?
- Other legislators who can influence their decision?
- “Opposition” arguments?



# When Approaching Staff...

Be professional, transparent, reasonable, respectful, & genuine!

Connect dots between issue and state/district.

- Relevance for the MoC?
- Relevance to constituents?

Help staff understand issue & how Congress's actions matter and affect lives.

- Don't overestimate what they know.
- Don't underestimate their influence!

If you don't know the "A" to a "Q," say so...and then offer to get the info and follow up!



# Please, No “Edu-Speak,” but...

Staff *will* jargonize....so here's a handy list:

- ***Authorization***: Enacting a program into existence.
- ***Appropriation***: Funding for authorized programs.
- ***Mark-up***: Subcommittee/committee meets to debate, amend, vote on a bill before it moves to the floor.
- ***Discretionary Spending***: Government functions funded through annual appropriations (Defense & NDD).
- ***Mandatory Spending***: “Entitlement” or nondiscretionary spending; no annual spending ceiling.

# And Just a Couple More...

- *Fiscal Year*: For feds = Oct. 1 – Sept. 30.
- *Continuing Resolution*: Stop-gap funding bill to keep government operating....while Congress figures out appropriations!



# Maximizing Your Meeting Time

Prepare a concise message.

- Make sure they get WHO you are and WHAT you do!
- Don't worry about hitting every point

Practice your message, so you don't have to read it...but notes are fine!

Don't just talk...be a good listener, too!

No 300-page reports. 1-2 page summaries are great.

Your #1 goal: Become the "go-to" person on special education!

# Steps to a Successful Meeting

*Time your arrival:* More now than ever!

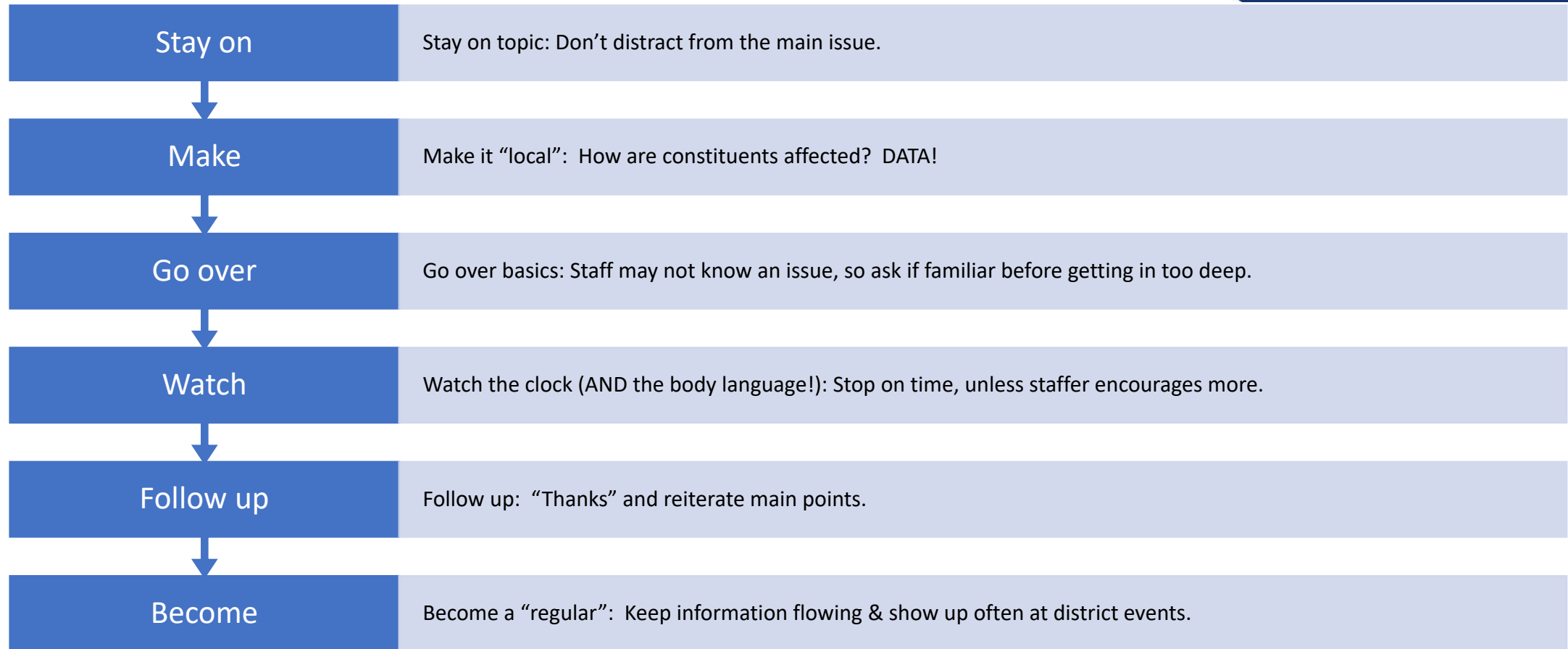
*Meeting length:* 10-30 minutes (Ask: “How much time will we have?”)

*Anticipate last-minute changes:* Staff schedules are fluid...go with the flow!

*Be patient, courteous, respectful...*even if they aren't! No arguing!

*Influence the influencer:* Remember, staff directly advise the member...and you're a constituent!

# A Few More Steps





# QUESTIONS??