

ARRANGING A MEETING WITH A CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OFFICE

One of the most impactful ways to communicate your interests with elected officials is by setting up a face-to-face meeting while they are home in their districts. All Members of Congress have a district office and in some cases may have multiple offices to serve you. These offices exist to communicate with constituents like you, so don't hesitate to reach out to set up a meeting with your legislator.

GETTING STARTED:

- While some legislators may provide a meeting request form on their website, ICSC recommends that you start by calling the district office first. The office will tell you their preferred method to formally request a meeting (mail, fax or email). Be prepared to let them know why you are requesting a meeting.
- When submitting the written request, include a summary of who you are and what you plan to discuss with the legislator. Example:

I am a local retail real estate developer and a member of the International Council of Shopping Centers. I and some of my fellow developers would appreciate the opportunity to meet with the Congressman to discuss the current challenges our industry is facing with accessing credit. ICSC members provide more than 532,000 jobs for Illinois. In 2008, our 4,658 shopping centers generated \$6.9 bil. in sales tax revenue.

If possible, we would like to set up a time while the Congressman is home during the Veteran's Day recess. Please let me know if you need any additional information.

- If they do not respond within a week, call the office back to follow up on the status of your request. Keep in mind that it can take a few weeks to confirm a meeting date, so you may have to follow up weekly on your request, until a date is set.

AFTER THE DATE IS SET:

- Make sure you prepare clear examples and stories about how a given issue is impacting your business. Provide as many numbers as possible to quantify the impact. The legislator can use this information when defending your concerns back in Washington.
- Call to confirm your meeting time a couple of days before the appointment.

AT THE MEETING:

- Keep your discussion focused. Avoid bringing up non-related issues for which the legislator is not prepared. This will detract from your central message.
- Keep an eye on the time. If your scheduled time is 30 minutes, don't try to squeeze in an extra 15 minutes.
- Ask how you can be helpful to the legislator.
- Provide leave behind information that the legislator can reference after the meeting is over.

AFTER THE MEETING:

- Within a week following the meeting, send a thank you letter. Make sure to include a brief summary of topics that were discussed during the meeting. Include any outstanding information that you agreed to provide.
- If you are willing, please share a brief summary of your meeting with ICSC's Office of Global Public Policy by sending an email to gpp@icsc.org. This information helps ICSC staff lobby more effectively on your behalf when legislators are back on Capitol Hill.