



ACLA's District Work Period Guide: *Resources for Arranging Local Meetings and Laboratory Tours with Members of Congress*

Introduction

This guide provides all the necessary resources for you to arrange a local meeting or laboratory tour with one of your U.S. Senators or U.S. Representative during district work periods, when legislators are back in their state/district. It includes step by step instructions, sample invitations, thank you letters, and a press release template.

Taking advantage of these district work periods is critical. Local office visits and laboratory tours are vital parts of the educational and advocacy efforts of the American Clinical Laboratory Association and our members. Further, meetings and tours offer a unique opportunity either to introduce yourself to your legislators or reinforce an existing relationship, which is integral to gaining their trust, and helps to influence public policy in the long run.

Once you have reviewed this guide, if you need additional assistance or have questions, do not hesitate to contact Francesca Fierro O'Reilly, Vice President, Government Relations, at foreilly@acla.com or 202-637-9466 or Tom Sparkman, Vice President, Government Relations, at tsparkman@acla.com or 202-637-9466.

Making the Invitation for a Local Office Visit

Typically, Congressional offices ask that meeting requests be submitted via email and/or fax in the form of a letter. These requests should be sent to the local Congressional office (details are provided below on how to obtain contact information) on your company letterhead and include a number of key pieces of information, specifically:

- The ask: you would like the Representative or Senator to tour your local facility or meet with you briefly at a mutually convenient place;
- A brief description of your company, including the number of employees currently working at your lab; and
- Your contact information.

Depending on the availability of the Member of Congress, it may take some time to arrange for the meeting. Because Congressional offices are often inundated with meeting requests, it is a good idea to follow up with a call to the district scheduler for the Senator or the Representative regarding your request if you have not heard back from the office within a week. A sample invitation follows at the end of the Guide.

To obtain the local contact information for your Members of Congress, ACLA has a web tool, which also can help you determine your Members of Congress:

- To begin, follow this link to ACLA's Capwiz website: <http://www.capwiz.com/acla/dbq/officials/>
- Once there enter your Zip Code to determine your U.S. Representative and U.S. Senators.
- Under the photo of each Member of Congress is a link labeled "info." Click that button.
- You will be taken to a web page with some basic information about your Member of Congress with a number of tabs on top of their picture labeled Bio, Contact, Committee, Staff, and PAC.
- Click the "Contact" tab.
- On the next web page you will be provided with contact information for your Member of Congress, including phone and fax numbers for both the Washington, D.C. office as well as the office(s) maintained in your state or Congressional District.
- Simply email or fax your meeting request to the attention of the scheduler, who is listed under the "staff" tab.

Remember to follow up with the district scheduler if you haven't received any form of response after a week. Once the meeting is scheduled, reconfirm the appointment with the scheduler a week or so before the meeting is to take place. If possible, try to find out how long you will be able to spend with the legislator and prepare accordingly. After the meeting, be sure to follow up with a thank you note. A sample thank you note is available at the end of the Guide. Offering a tour is a good follow up task.

Planning For and Conducting an Office Visit

- Be sure to let the scheduler know who will be attending the meeting.
- Less is more—bring no more than four people or else the meeting will be difficult to manage.
- Stick to one or two issues.
- Ask "open ended" questions in order to elicit lengthier, thoughtful responses, rather than yes/no questions.
- Stick to the facts rather than unsubstantiated opinions. Be a good listener, even if the legislator disagrees with you on the specific issue because he or she may support other issues of importance to clinical laboratories and you don't want to stifle future dialogue. Acknowledge where other views have merit, stressing that you want to work more closely together whenever possible. And always try to end on a positive note.

Making the Invitation for a Laboratory Tour

As for an office meeting, Congressional offices often ask that tour invitations be submitted via email and/or fax in the form of a letter. The same process for an office visit request holds for a laboratory tour, so use the same instructions above. A sample invitation follows at the end of the Guide.

Planning for and Conducting a Laboratory Tour

- Simplicity is best, aiming to show the elected official the variety of work performed by a clinical laboratory on behalf of the patients they serve. Be sure to involve a wide assortment of employees—not just management.
- Set aside at least one hour for the tour, and if at all possible, allow time for the legislator to meet with a group of assembled employees and make some remarks.
- Be sure to prepare a printed fact sheet about your facility and be prepared to answer questions from the legislator and his/her staff members.
- Check to see if the Member of Congress would like the media to be aware of the visit, and if so, a sample media advisory is included at the end of the Guide.
- If you can tie the tour to a special event such as a groundbreaking, professional award or Employee of the Year ceremonies, etc., that may heighten the attractiveness of participating for the Member of Congress.
- Notify employees about the tour and provide them with background information on the Member. Prepare them so they are comfortable and not surprised by the visitors.
- Arrange for a photographer to be on hand to take a selection of quality, nonintrusive photos of the event. Every elected official likes to have photos of meetings with constituents.

Follow Up after a Visit or Laboratory Tour

An essential part of a successful political life is prompt follow up:

- Send a thank you letter to the Member of Congress and any of their staff that participated the day after the event, while the details of the tour are fresh in the legislator's mind. A sample thank you note is included at the end of the Guide.
- Please provide ACLA with feedback on how the meeting or tour went. A feedback form follows at the end of the Guide.

In conclusion, ACLA greatly appreciates your willingness to become involved on the local level and stands ready to provide you with any assistance you may need; do not hesitate to contact us at any time.

Sample Meeting Request (on Company Letterhead)

Date

The Honorable Josephine Smith
U.S. House of Representatives (or U.S. Senate)
Washington, DC 20515 (20510)

Dear Representative (or Senator) Smith:

On behalf of COMPANY NAME, our employees, and the patients that we serve, I am writing to request the opportunity to meet with you at your convenience.

COMPANY NAME is located in CITY NAME, employs XX, and performs YYY number of clinical laboratory tests each year. These diagnostic tests are vital to American health care as they drive much of physician decision making.

During the meeting, we would like to discuss the role of clinical laboratory testing in the health care system, and specifically how these tests affect Medicare beneficiaries (OR other issue of importance to your company).

Thank you in advance for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Sample Laboratory Tour Invitation (on Company Letterhead)

Date

The Honorable John Doe
U.S. House of Representatives (or U.S. Senate)
Washington, DC 20515 (20510)

Dear Representative (or Senator) Doe:

On behalf of COMPANY NAME, our employees, and the patients that we serve, we would like to invite you to visit the *Name of facility* in **YOUR TOWN** at a date and time of your convenience.

We look forward to providing you with an opportunity to see firsthand the highly specialized work we do to meet the needs of our patients and their health care practitioners. During the meeting, we would like to discuss the role of clinical laboratory testing in the health care system, and specifically how these tests affect Medicare beneficiaries (OR other issue of importance to your company).

Thank you in advance for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Sample Meeting Thank You Note (on company letterhead)

Also, be sure to include your business card in your letter.

Date

The Honorable Joe Jones
United States House of Representatives (U.S. Senate)
Washington, DC 20515 (20510)

Dear Representative (or Senator) Jones:

On behalf of COMPANY NAME, thank you for taking the time to meet with me and OTHER MEETING PARTICIPANTS on DATE.

We appreciated the opportunity to discuss the role of clinical laboratory testing in the health care system, and look forward to continuing our dialogue in the future.

In the future, if I may be of assistance to you or your staff on issues involving clinical laboratory services, please do not hesitate to contact me. Further, if you or your staff would like to visit our laboratory, we would be happy to provide you with a tour at your convenience.

Again, many thanks for considering our perspective.

Sincerely yours,

Sample Laboratory Visit Thank You Note (on company letterhead)

Also, be sure to include your business card in your letter.

Date

The Honorable Jane Doe
United States House of Representatives (U.S. Senate)
Washington, DC 20515 (20510)

Dear Representative (or Senator) Doe:

On behalf of COMPANY NAME, thank you for taking the time to visit FACILITY NAME on DATE.

We appreciated the opportunity for you to see our laboratory and the testing we conduct for patients. We also thank you for listening to our thoughts and concerns and look forward to continuing our dialogue in the future.

In the future, if I may be of assistance to you or your staff on issues involving clinical laboratory services, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Again, many thanks for considering our perspective.

Sincerely yours,

Sample Media Advisory for Laboratory Tour

For Immediate Release

Contact: Name, Title, Company name, email address, phone number

COMPANY NAME will host a facility tour for NAME OF MEMBER OF CONGRESS to demonstrate our commitment to providing high quality clinical laboratory services to patients in and around our community.

When: Date of Event
Time

Where: Name of Facility
Address

Who: Name of the legislator and any other VIPs who will accompany him or her, as well as those leading the tour

Agenda: Briefly describe the tour agenda



ACLA District Meeting or Laboratory Tour Feedback Form

Tour **Y/N**
Meeting **Y/N**

Date:

Participating Legislator:

Location:

Other Attendees:

Topics Discussed (be sure to include any significant comments/feedback from the legislator):

Were any photos taken? Y/N Would you be willing to share them with us? Y/N

Did any press attend? If so, who were they (paper, TV station) and did they cover the event?

General thoughts/observations:

Is there anything ACLA can help you with regarding follow up?