Tips for Getting a Member of Congress to Visit Your Research Lab

BEFORE THE VISIT:

1. Research the member of Congress to see if he/she has a particular health/science-related concern by visiting their website.
2. Build a relationship with the member of Congress’ district office by visiting their office. Consider visiting the office with postdocs.
3. Contact your university government affairs department to inquire about the process of inviting a member of Congress to your lab.

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND:

1. Timing is key. Consider connecting the lab visit to a larger event such as a grant announcement, major speaker visit, (Nobel Laureate, National Academies of Science member, etc.) or conference on campus.
2. Try to recruit an institute, program, or the NIH director to the lab visit.
3. Consider asking a company tied to the university or lab to sponsor a reception before or after the lab visit.
4. Consider having the member of Congress visit a lab with equipment he/she can “play” with for photo opportunities.
5. Best day and time of the year to request a laboratory visit includes:
   a. Friday - Monday
   b. During a congressional recess (ex. spring break). Check the congressional calendar beforehand. (See Senate and House schedules.)

REQUESTING A VISIT:

1. Use FASEB’s lab visit template to email your member of Congress. If you have supported the member of Congress’ campaign, mention this in your request.
WHAT TO DO ON THE TOUR:

1. Provide a basic understanding of the work done in the lab.
2. Describe the potential health benefits of your work.
3. If possible, have the member of Congress work with a hands-on example of the work you are describing.
4. Make sure the member of Congress meets with a range of people in the lab (administrative staff, lab technicians, students, postdocs, senior researchers, and the PI) to discuss the role federal funding plays in supporting their research.

WHAT IF THEY DECLINE YOUR REQUEST:

1. Do not get discouraged. Members of Congress are very busy and receive many meeting requests per day. Extend a similar visit to a member of his/her staff. Congressional staffers work closely with members of Congress to prioritize key issues that benefit their constituents.