

# GUIDELINES FOR A SUCCESSFUL CONGRESSIONAL MEETING



### SCHEDULE THE MEETING

- Call, email or write your legislator's office to schedule the meeting.
- Generally, you will be asked about what specific issues you would like to discuss.
- Provide talking points for DAV's legislative priorities.

### PREPARING FOR THE MEETING

- Meetings usually last 15 to 25 minutes, depending on the member's schedule.
- Plan to discuss no more than three or four issues.
- If you are attending the meeting as a group, pick a spokesperson to lead the discussion.
- Provide talking points for DAV's legislative priorities.
- Learn everything you can about the issue(s) you plan to discuss including any potential opposition the legislator may have so you are prepared to defend your position. (On veterans' issues, the opposition usually stems from costs to pay for the program or benefit being proposed.)

### AT THE MEETING

- Be punctual and arrive at least 5 minutes before the appointment time.
- Dress neatly and conservatively. Always be courteous and respectful.
- Do not be upset if you end up meeting with the legislator's staff. They are often more knowledgeable of individual issues than the legislators themselves, and they will inform the legislator of your views and requests.
- Introduce yourself and all members of your group to the legislator or staff members: tell them who

you are and where you live. After a minute or two of "small talk," state your position on the issue(s) you came to discuss.

- Be concise, factual, brief and be sure to listen carefully to responses or concerns.
- Be ready to answer questions and discuss your issue in detail. If you cannot answer the question, let them know that you will ask someone from DAV's national legislative department to follow up. Make sure you inform the DAV legislative staff of the question and the person to contact in the legislator's office.
- If the legislator does not support an issue, you can respectfully debate the topic if you feel comfortable, but do not become over-argumentative. Emphasize the positives of your standpoint, and always end the conversation on a positive note.
- Remain nonpartisan throughout the meeting.
- Thank them for meeting.

### AFTER THE MEETING

- Always send a follow-up email or letter thanking your legislator or staff members. Be sure to include any additional information you may have offered to provide in support of your issue. The follow-up message is important, because it confirms your commitment to your cause and helps build a valuable relationship between you and your representative.
- Stay in touch with congressional staff throughout the year.