NCBA CLUSA | ADVOCACY

At-Home Advocacy

Connecting Policymakers to Co-ops

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Overview

Policymakers on the Hill can become disconnected from their communities and constituents at home, decreasing the impact of policy and creating a divide between voters and elected leaders. Encouraging your Members of Congress to visit your co-op and meet with members is a great way to build relationships that are incredibly useful during conversations about funding for important programs

Goals

- ✓ **Empower** NCBA members to engage directly with their Members of Congress, expanding advocacy impact beyond annual Washington DC fly-ins.
- ✓ **Increase** the number and quality of NCBA member-led, in-district advocacy engagements with federal policymakers.

Interested in Planning a Visit?

Research

Use House.gov to find out who your Member of Congress is.

Read about the committees they serve on, the policies they support, and their personal background.

Schedule

Call the district office. Introduce yourself and your co-op. Ask to speak with the district scheduling team.

Invite the Member to visit your co-op. Schedule a time and date that works for all parties.

Site Visit

Give the Member and their staff a tour of your facility. Answer their questions and be ready to talk about your co-op's history and purpose.

Have a short conversation on policy asks, if appropriate. Thank them for coming!

Important Reminders

- ✓ Don't be discouraged if your Member of Congress or their office is unavailble or unresponsive; their offices can be very busy. Be determined and stay in touch!
- ✓ If you're unsure what policy asks might be appropriate for the meeting, a good approach may be to talk about your experiences and where legislative fixes might be useful: for example, the importance of supporting RCDG, discussing the SBA 7(a) program, and ensuring greater access to data on co-ops.

Tips for Success

- ✓ Reach out early and often. Subscribe to newsletters to see where the Member has been recently, and where they're going next.
- ✓ Check the Congressional calendar, available on RollCall.com, so you know when the Member will be in your district.
- ✓ Reach out to the NCBA Advocacy team for questions, advice, or concerns!

Meeting Request and Scheduling

Over the Phone or via E-mail

Hello, my name is [Name] and I'm calling from [Your Co-op].

I would like to be invite [Member of Congress] to visit our co-op. Can you connect me to the staffer that handles the Member's schedule?

We're located at [Address] and are available on [Dates and Times] to provide a tour of our co-op, answer questions about our business model, and share the co-op story.

Note: If the Member of Congress is unable to visit your co-op, a staffer from their office may be connected to you instead.

Scheduling for Success

1-2 Weeks Before

- Reach out to your Member of Congress and schedule a date and time for them to visit your co-op.

1 Week Before

- Determine who will meet with the Member of Congress. This may be you, or another member of your team.
- Determine your goals for this meeting and be ready to talk about your co-op, the cooperative business model, and the issues that matter most to you and your members.

A Few Days Before

- Confirm the date and time with the Member's office. Share information about parking or appropriate clothing.

Meeting Day

- Greet the Member at the door, and begin the tour!

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What Makes a Successful Visit?

Sometimes, it can be difficult to determine if a meeting was successful. Ways to determine if a visit went well include:

Attendance

Even if the Member of Congress did not personally visit your co-op, having a member of their team spend time at your co-op indicates that they value cooperatives and are interested in learning more.

Questions

Did the attendee ask questions, follow up, and engage in conversation? If so, that means that your co-op's story had an impact, and they're sure to bring ideas and stories back to DC.

Media

Watch your Member of Congress' social media pages, newsletter, and press releases for write-ups about your visit, especially if pictures were taken!

Connection

Having conversations about the issues that the Member may hear about (i.e. food insecurity) and your co-op's purpose can open the door for further connection on other issues co-ops can solve!

Remember to follow up!

Thank the Member of Congress or their staff for visiting your co-op. You may wish to call the office, send an email, or mail a thank-you card.

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Sample Talking Points

CO-OP TAX TREATMENT

Subchapter T of the Internal Revenue Code recognizes cooperatives as member-focused businesses that return profits to member-owners through patronage refunds rather than retaining income for the business. It allows earnings from member-related business to be passed through with single tax treatment, while non-member income is taxed at corporate rates, helping ensure cooperatives are treated fairly alongside other business forms.

> **Ensure federal tax policy maintains fair treatment for cooperatives under Subchapter T, including single tax treatment of member-related earnings, so that member-owners are not put at a disadvantage.**

FARM BILL

The Rural Cooperative Development Grant program is the only federal program dedicated exclusively to supporting the startup, innovation, and growth of cooperative businesses. Cooperative Development Centers help rural cooperatives launch, expand, and remain sustainable across sectors, but current matching requirements and burdensome reporting processes can disadvantage under-resourced rural organizations and limit program efficiency.

> **Support modernization of the RCDG program through the Strengthening Rural Cooperatives and Communities Act so co-op development centers can better support rural workforce development and local economies.**

ACCESS TO FINANCING

Although cooperatives are explicitly eligible for SBA's 7(a) loan program, current personal guarantee requirements effectively block many co-ops from accessing financing because their ownership structures typically do not include a single 20% owner or majority-controlling group. These requirements are unnecessary for 100% member-owned cooperatives and remain a barrier despite congressional direction for SBA to identify alternatives.

> **Support the Main Street 2.0 Act to level the playing field for cooperative businesses by removing or reforming SBA personal guarantee requirements that prevent co-ops from accessing 7(a) financing.**

INTERNATIONAL

Cooperatives play a critical role in international food assistance and agricultural development programs by strengthening food security, supporting locally led development, and expanding opportunities for U.S. agricultural producers. Programs such as Food for Progress, Farmer-to-Farmer, McGovern-Dole, and Food for Peace use cooperatives to build stronger markets, provide technical assistance, and help eradicate hunger in communities around the world.

> **Protect and strengthen international food assistance programs that recognize cooperatives as essential partners in advancing food security, agricultural development, and trade opportunities for U.S. producers.**