



National Humanities Alliance
Advocacy Guide



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Alliance

Thank you for giving your time to advocate for the humanities on Capitol Hill.

Your visit to Capitol Hill is an important part of a broader advocacy strategy that aims to persuade Members of Congress to increase federal funding for humanities research, teaching, preservation, and programming. As a constituent (or the representative of an organization with members who are constituents), you can testify to the positive impact of humanities work in your district and state.

This document will guide you through goals for your meetings and ways to prepare in advance. It also offers tips on what to expect when meeting with representatives, senators, and their staff members. Finally, it will offer suggestions for following up and building long-term relationships.

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Before the Meetings

GOALS FOR MEETINGS

- Establish a collegial relationship with the office. This is a long-term investment that will depend on follow-up from you and NHA.
- Address misconceptions about the humanities, and show the Member the impact of your work in the community.
- Make specific requests. You will receive Member Profiles that list requests appropriate for the Member. They might include:
 - Join the bipartisan Congressional Humanities Caucus or Senate Cultural Caucus. Membership in these caucuses demonstrates support for the NEH and humanities education.
 - Sign Dear Colleague Letters that support funding the humanities. Dear Colleague Letters are authored by Members of Congress and others have the opportunity to sign on.
- Gauge the Member's attitude toward federal funding for the humanities.
- Provide information that will allow a staff member to create a memo on humanities funding that will inform the Member's official policy position.

PREPARING FOR YOUR VISIT

You will be visiting Members of Congress and/or their staff as part of a group. We encourage you to meet with your group in advance to plan roles and coordinate examples. We will provide time at the Annual Meeting for your group to meet, but consider making contact in advance by email or conference call. Below, we suggest a number of ways to prepare for your upcoming meetings. We will send you a schedule and the names of the Members/staffers you will be meeting with one week before Humanities Advocacy Day.

REVIEW THE RESOURCES WE PROVIDE

- Learn about the Members of Congress you will be meeting, including specifics on their record of support for the humanities.
- Learn about the impact of the NEH and other federal funding streams nationally and in specific states and districts.
- Craft arguments for NEH funding that will resonate with particular Members of Congress.

IDENTIFY UPCOMING EVENTS TO WHICH YOU CAN INVITE YOUR MEMBER OF CONGRESS

- The dedication of a humanities institute, the opening of a museum exhibition, or a community forum are all good opportunities to engage a Member of Congress at home during a recess. Please reference our District Advocacy Guide for tips on inviting a Member of Congress to an event.
- These events will help create a connection between your work, the constituents who care about your work, and the Member.

IDENTIFY MATERIALS THAT YOU CAN LEAVE BEHIND

- Hill meetings generally start or end with the exchange of business cards.
- Members/staffers will likely be interested in a brochure or handout about your organization's work.
- We will provide you with additional materials to leave behind.
- Discuss leave-behinds with the rest of your group and how to present them.

The Meetings

There are three House and three Senate office buildings on Capitol Hill. We have included a map at the back of this guide for your reference. The schedule of visits for your delegation will list the location of each of your meetings with a building and room number. Please keep the following in mind as you make your way to your meetings.

ARRIVING AT THE OFFICE

- Allow sufficient time to pass through security when you enter the House and Senate buildings. Once you are inside one of the House buildings, you can travel by underground hallways to other House buildings without needing to go through security again. The same is true for travel between Senate buildings.
- In the Cannon House office building, all room numbers are three digits and the first number corresponds to the floor. For example room 303 is on the third floor of Cannon. In the Longworth and Rayburn House office buildings, all room numbers are 4 digits. The first number corresponds to the building, 1 for Longworth and 2 for Rayburn, the second number corresponds to the floor, and the third and fourth numbers correspond to the room. For example, room 1207 is room 7 on the second floor of Longworth.
- Arrive at the Member's office five minutes early. Since distances between and within the Senate and House office buildings are great and navigation within buildings can be confusing, make sure that you begin your walk to the next meeting as soon as possible.
- Check in with the staff member at the front desk.
- Most House offices are fairly small, so your delegation may have to wait in the hallway.
- Once you are in the office, look around. Members may have items in their office that will help you make a connection and start a conversation.

WHO YOU ARE MEETING: WHAT TO EXPECT

Although you may have a meeting with a Representative or Senator, your meeting will usually be with a staff member who is entrusted to work on behalf of the Member. Most of the staff members you meet with will have arts and humanities as part of their portfolio, meaning that not only should they be familiar with our issue areas but they are responsible for keeping track of any legislation, pertinent news, and constituent correspondence related to the arts and humanities portfolio and reporting that information to the Member of Congress and senior staff. Staffers in any number of positions can be responsible for the arts and humanities portfolio and it varies from office to office; therefore, you may have to adjust your approach accordingly (see below for tips on doing so).

Conducting some background research on the staffers, like looking them up on LinkedIn, can help you find points of connection to ease into the conversation. It is important to remember that nearly all staff members, regardless of rank, age, or experience are relied upon by the Member and by senior staff. The most common positions you'll see in meetings are:

CHIEF OF STAFF

- The Member's most senior advisor, a chief of staff coordinates the office's strategy, manages all staff members, and frequently acts and speaks on behalf of the Member.
- Their time will likely be limited.

LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR (LD)/SENIOR POLICY ADVISOR

- LDs are very experienced staffers who manage the Legislative Assistants and Legislative Correspondents, direct overall legislative strategy, and advance the agenda through high-level discussions with other offices.

SENIOR LEGISLATIVE ASSISTANT/LEGISLATIVE ASSISTANT (LA)

- They have high level of responsibility.
- Their portfolio includes a variety of issues that they manage for the Member, though knowledge of each issue may vary considerably.

SCHEDULER/EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

- They often have the most contact with a Member and are deeply trusted.
- In House offices, they sometimes have a minor legislative role.
- They often have a great sense of the Member's priorities and opinions.

LEGISLATIVE CORRESPONDENT (LC)

- They provide support on legislative issues to senior staff. LCs work under the supervision of more senior staff to draft proposals that the Member co-sponsors or signs on to but usually gets approval from someone more senior first.
- They may not have a deep knowledge about the agencies and programs we care about and may not know the Member's position.
- Be prepared to drive the conversation. LCs may have very little to say but are likely happy to take the full half hour to hear about the issue.

THE CONVERSATION

You will typically have about 10-15 minutes—five at the least; 30 at the most—to make your case. You may consider working with your group to draft short scripts or talking points for each of the following items:

THANK, INTRODUCE, AND CONNECT

Thank the Member or staffer for meeting with you. Identify yourself and your institution. You may want to begin with a statement about your institution's impact on the community or information about programs that your institution sponsors.

This may also be a good opportunity to try to connect with the Member or staffer on a personal level so that they remember you and your visit at the end of the day. The staff member may be a graduate of your institution or have an interest in your discipline or research. At the very least you can talk about the weather, current bills on the floor, or explore points of personal intersection that come up naturally.

MAKE YOUR CASE AND RELATE IT TO THE MEMBER

Drawing on the resources provided to you, make a persuasive case about the impact of federally funded humanities programs. Remember to focus on the positive. Frame your case in terms that will resonate with the Member of Congress. What issues are they passionate about? How do these intersect with the humanities? How can public humanities programs, for example, further their interests? Explain how humanities programs, teaching, research, and preservation have a positive impact on communities in their district. Invite them to an event at your institution.

You might also consider ways to make an emotional case for the value of your request. Do you have a current grant that advances a public policy goal that the Member may care about such as supporting veterans' transitions to civilian life, deepening cultural understanding among diverse populations, revitalizing a native language, preserving community heritage, etc.? Do you have a brief story that illustrates the impact of your teaching?

STATE YOUR REQUEST

State your request directly, being as specific as possible. Is the Member willing to sign Dear Colleague Letters? Or join the Congressional Humanities Caucus/Senate Cultural Caucus? Or do they want to take a more active role in championing the NEH?

OFFER TO FOLLOW UP

Do not let the conversation end once the meeting ends. Offer to follow up with resources that provide additional information. Make plans for future contact—e.g., promise to send information about a topic you discussed or the Dear Colleague Letter. Ask how you can contact their office in the future. Remember to thank them again for their time and for discussing the importance of federal funding for the humanities.

GAME PLAN FOR YOUR VISIT

- Thank, introduce, and connect
- Make your case and relate it to the Member
- State your request
- Offer further resources

RESPONDING TO DIFFICULTIES

IF THE STAFF MEMBER SEEMS UNINFORMED OR INEXPERIENCED

- Be prepared to drive the conversation. This is not necessarily a sign of a lack of interest. Whether these meetings last five minutes or 20 usually depends on how much advocates have prepared to say.
- If the staffer doesn't know the Member's position, it might be because they are not on the record on the issue.
 - Ask if the staffer can find out whether the Member would sign the Dear Colleague Letters that are circulating.
 - If the staffer agrees to find out if the Member will sign on, check back by email in a week to see if the staffer has an answer.
- Leave materials behind that will help the staff member write a memo about the subject and invite them to contact you or NHA if they ever have questions or need information.

IF THE STAFF MEMBER HAS VERY LITTLE TIME

- Thank the staff member for their time and for the Member's support if they've been supportive.
- Quickly demonstrate the support the humanities have in your community by mentioning organizations you're a part of or briefly sharing an example of an important humanities program.
- Make sure that you request that the Member sign the Dear Colleague Letters that are circulating.
- Follow up with an email providing more resources.
- A week after the meeting, check on the status of your request that they sign the Dear Colleague Letters.

IF THE MEMBER IS UNSUPPORTIVE

- Try to identify why the Member is unsupportive and if any misperceptions exist.
- Politely dispel any misperceptions that come up. Common misperceptions include:
 - NEH grants are awarded by government bureaucrats. *Explain that experts from around the country serve as peer reviewers for all grants.*
 - Government funding crowds out private investment. *Explain that many NEH grants often require private matching funds that incentivize and facilitate private support.*
 - The humanities use tax money for programs that only benefit wealthy Americans. *Point to examples of the diverse populations that benefit from NEH and state council programs.*
 - The NEH isn't awarding as many competitive grants as usual. *The NEH lost more than 70 percent of its staff due to DOGE actions. It is essential to restore the NEH to its full capacity so that it can award grants as it normally does.*
- Don't give up. Try to tailor the discussion to their concerns.
- Include their objections on your Post-Visit Worksheet—this feedback is helpful both in our follow-ups with that office and in shaping our talking points.

After the Meetings

SOON AFTER THE MEETING

USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO PUBLICIZE THE MEETING

- Post thank yous to the Member on social media.
- Ask permission to take a picture and post it along with the “thank you” post.

SEND A FOLLOW-UP EMAIL

- We will provide contact information for the staffers and instructions for following up. Please feel free to copy us on the messages.
- Thank them for their time and their support or consideration, as appropriate. When an office is unsupportive of humanities funding, please avoid expressing disappointment.
- Send along any additional information and materials that you promised. We will provide resources that you can include in a follow-up email as well.
- Reiterate any requests, such as joining the Congressional Humanities Caucus/Senate Cultural Caucus or signing Dear Colleague Letters. We will provide the staff contacts for you to pass along as well.

GIVE US YOUR FEEDBACK

- Please give NHA feedback on your visit by filling out the Post-Visit Worksheet, which we will share with you.
- Details about how Members or staffers responded to your questions can be helpful in:
 - Gauging their level of support and attitude towards the humanities.
 - Honing our arguments and strategizing about new approaches to unsupportive Members.
 - Identifying Members who are interested in becoming more involved in promoting the interests of the humanities in Congress.
- You will also receive a survey following Humanities Advocacy Day asking for your feedback about the event. Please be as candid and informative as possible in your responses.

IN THE COMING WEEKS AND MONTHS

REMEMBER THAT EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY IS YEAR-ROUND

- Once you’ve made in-person contact with a congressional office, it’s much easier to communicate on specific policy issues in the future.
- Hold your elected representatives accountable by monitoring and acknowledging their actions on the policy issues that matter to you. You can do this by emailing the staff member with whom you have met.
- Add the office to your organization’s mailing list or periodically forward selected publications and news items of interest.
- Like and follow your legislators on social media to see what they are up to/thinking about.
- Invite the Member to participate in a humanities event. Take pictures and post them on your organization’s website and social media accounts to thank the Member for their involvement with the humanities.

Appendix

Federal Funding for the Humanities

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES (NEH)

The NEH is an independent federal agency created by Congress in 1965. With few private foundations providing funding for the humanities, the NEH provides crucial support for research, education, preservation, and public programs in the humanities through grants to a wide range of educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, and individual scholars nationwide. Through national grants and its partnership with the state and jurisdictional humanities councils, NEH funding reaches every congressional district and U.S. jurisdiction.

www.neh.gov

TITLE VI/FULBRIGHT-HAYS (INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS)

The Department of Education's International Education and Foreign Language Studies (IEFLS) programs, including Higher Education Act (HEA) Title VI and Fulbright-Hays, form the vital infrastructure of the federal government's investment in the international service pipeline. The IEFLS programs support comprehensive language and area study centers, international business centers, and language resource centers within the United States; research and curriculum development; opportunities for American students and scholars to study abroad; and activities to increase the number of underrepresented minorities in international service.

www.ed.gov/grants-and-programs/grants-higher-education/international-and-foreign-language-education

NATIONAL ARCHIVES (NARA)

Congress established the National Archives in 1934 to preserve and make accessible to the public the records of the U.S. Government. American citizens rely on access to immigration, naturalization, military, and census records held by the National Archives for many routine needs and for veterans and their families to gain access to benefits. NARA is best known to the public as the keeper of original copies of the Declaration of Independence, U.S. Constitution, and Bill of Rights. NARA now has over 40 facilities nationwide, including 14 Presidential Libraries.

www.archives.gov

INSTITUTE OF MUSEUM AND LIBRARY SERVICES (IMLS)

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation's 123,000 libraries and 17,500 museums. The mission of IMLS is to inspire libraries and museums to advance innovation, lifelong learning, and cultural and civic engagement. In addition to grant making, IMLS provides critical leadership to the museum and library communities through support for research and policy development. Its Office of Museum Services (OMS) awards grants to museums to support educating students, preserving collections, coordinating resources, and digitizing collections. IMLS also administers the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA), which consolidates federal library programs while expanding services for learning and access to information resources.

www.imls.gov

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS (LOC)

The Library of Congress is the largest and most comprehensive legislative and national library in the world. Created by Congress in 1800 and sustained by Congress through every period of our nation's history, the Library of Congress is America's oldest federal cultural institution. It stands as both a symbol and a working institution of fundamental importance for our knowledge-based democracy—preserving and making available vital resources for scholars, educators, students, policymakers, and individual citizens.

www.loc.gov

AMERICAN HISTORY AND CIVICS

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, signed into law in December 2015, includes funding for K–12 history and civics education—the first dedicated funding lines for these subjects since the “Teaching American History Grants” were eliminated in FY 2012. This funding supports professional development programs for teachers, intensive educational programs for outstanding students, and evidence-based, innovative instruction in American history, civics and government, and geography.

CAPITOL HILL AND SURROUNDING AREAS

