

National Community Development Week: Invite Your Legislators to Participate in Activities

National Community Development Week is always held during a Congressional district work period and is the perfect opportunity to demonstrate to your Congressional delegation how critical community developing funding is in your area. We've heard recently from Congressional staff that inviting members of Congress to site visits and other events that showcase the importance of community development funding in your area will be a critical factor in preserving the programs in the difficult upcoming fiscal year- do your part to help by inviting your Congressional delegation to your National Community Development Week events. A few early actions can help ensure that your members of Congress or their staff is available to participate in your event.

- First, decide what type of event you'd like to hold so you can communicate basic details to Congressional schedulers and other staff. Offices will ask questions like: who is participating, what is the size of the event, where and when is the event, what is the focus, will the Senator/Representative be asked to make remarks, and will there be media? You don't need a fully-planned event, but being able to provide those details will be helpful to staff. If the date and time of your event is flexible, you may be able to work with staff to better fit in the Senator's or Representative's schedule. *If not, extend the offer to relevant policy staff who may be in town for the work period.*
- Second, contact offices ASAP- it's never too early to submit your scheduling request.

Start by calling your most local district office- phone numbers for district offices are available on the legislators' web sites. Some offices schedule exclusively through their DC office, so you may need to make several calls before you get in contact with the appropriate staffer. Ask for the scheduler who handles the member's calendar while the member is in the district and make sure you get his/her contact information so you can follow-up directly.

Many offices have a form to fill out or will ask for a formal invite letter, so get very specific instructions on their process for submitting a scheduling request and submit your request immediately.

- Third, follow-up frequently. Staffers, particularly schedulers, are extremely busy and juggle dozens of scheduling requests at any given time. Make sure that your request doesn't fall between the cracks by following up frequently. Ask the staffer handling your request what the best way to get in touch with him/her is and use those communication methods. If you are having trouble getting in touch with the person handling your request, leave messages with the office receptionist, too.
- Finally, don't get discouraged if members of Congress or their staff cannot accommodate your request. Work with the office on alternative ways they can participate- ask if they can issue a press release about your event, promote it on social media, or begin a scheduling request for a

district work period later in the year. They may have other ideas on how they can participate, so be flexible.

- For more information on how to build relationships and plan an effective site visit, NCDAs has prepared a [video](#) to help guide you through the process.