Tips for Meeting with a Member of Congress and Staff

Do...

1. Wear comfortable clothes and shoes;
2. Pick up your badge at registration; leftover badges are considered ‘no shows’ and corresponding appointments will be cancelled as a courtesy to Congressional Offices.
3. Bring a photo ID;
4. Show up on time and to all of your scheduled meetings; it is never acceptable to miss a scheduled meeting.
5. Call ahead if you are going to be late to your next appointment;
6. Do not attend a meeting that you are NOT scheduled for; meetings are scheduled only for participants from the district. It is not appropriate to ‘crash’ a meeting.
7. Research your Members of Congress before your meetings;
8. Share speaking time with others in your group – time should be split equally between physicians and students;
9. Stay focused on the reason for your visit;
10. Use anecdotal situations to support your issues;
11. Be ready to answer questions on your issues;
12. Agree to disagree if you and the Member of Congress or staff can’t agree on an issue;

Don’t...

1. Bring anything with you to Capitol Hill that you are not allowed to bring on an airplane.
2. Argue or antagonize. The AOA depends upon its relationships with Members of Congress and staff. Hostile behavior could result in the AOA no longer being welcome in some offices.
3. Ask a Member to support a bill without knowing if they are already a supporter. Nothing will decrease your credibility more than asking the author of a bill to be a co-sponsor.
4. Be afraid to say ‘I don’t know.’ If you are unsure about an answer, take note of the question and give the information to an AOA staff member to follow-up.
5. Steer away from the issues. You are here to represent the AOA on several issues; personal objectives can be addressed with your legislators at another time.
6. Be offended by inconvenience. Capitol Hill is a ‘working office’ with hearings and votes occurring frequently and often without warning; things may not always occur as planned.