



AFP Virtual Lobby Week (April 26 – 30)

Q&A Overview

What is Virtual Lobby Week?

It's the week when AFP chapters in the U.S. schedule at least one meeting (if not more) with their members of Congress—either their local U.S. representative or one of their two U.S. senators.

What are we supposed to talk about with them?

AFP is asking chapters to discuss our two key legislative priorities: extension of the universal charitable deduction, and passage of the IRA Legacy Act (which addresses changes to the Charitable IRA Rollover provision.) There will likely be other issues to discuss as well.

What should I do if I don't know anything about these issues?

AFP will have fact sheets about each issue, as well as resources to help you set up, coordinate and attend these meetings (our chapter toolkit). We're also planning a Zoom call for all attendees the week before to talk about Virtual Lobby Week, offer tips and even roleplay a couple of scenarios.

Doesn't AFP have a public policy staff? Why are chapters being asked to do this?

AFP does have a public policy program that lobbies on Capitol Hill on these issues and others. However, grassroots engagement and support—the advocacy of individuals who lives in the member of Congress' district or state—has the most influence on public policy issues. Plus, creating relationships with local federal officials is good practice for any chapter, and Virtual Lobby Week is a great way to start.

How do we do it? Is it complicated?

Not at all. It's a bit like scheduling a donor meeting. Call up the office, find the right staff person. Schedule the meeting. Figure out whom from the chapter can participate. Plan who'll say what during the meeting. Hold the meeting. Voila! Oh, and don't forget to update AFP Global on what you're doing. We'll have resources for every step of the process in our toolkit (see the last question).

What if we're a large geographic chapter and represent several districts of different members of Congress?

We're encouraging chapters to visit as many members of Congress as they'd like, so if you have several in your area, please visit them all if you have the resources and coordination. It's a great way to have different members of the chapter participate.

How many members can and should participate?

While Zoom does make meetings more accessible, you don't want to overwhelm members of Congress and their staff. Six is probably the most you should have, and we recommend four or five.

We haven't done any lobbying or advocacy before. What should we expect?

Fundraisers are natural-born advocates. Except, in this case, the donor is a member of Congress, and your "ask" is getting them to support legislation. You'll use your stewarding and storytelling abilities to get them to say yes. Similar to what you want from a donor, you're asking for their support—only in this instance, it's legislative support. Members of Congress want to help their constituents—that's their job, and most are supportive of philanthropy.

There are several chapters in our state. How should we handle meetings with our two U.S. senators?

We encourage chapters in the same state to coordinate meetings together, so U.S. senators and their staff aren't holding the same meetings over and over again. AFP Global can provide contact information for each chapter. Ideally, each chapter should choose one or two representatives, depending on the number of chapters in the state, to attend these meetings (keeping in mind that it's best not to have more than six people in one meeting). With two senators for each state, there should be opportunities for all chapters to be represented in at least one of the meetings with their senators.

Is it OK to meet with staff if the representative or senator can't attend?

While it's always good to have the representative or senator there—and we're finding that with Zoom calls, they can attend more meetings on average—meeting with staff can be just as beneficial. Staff are often more likely to know the details of the legislation and can, in some cases, speak more knowledgeably about the issue. Having a relationship with a staffer is just as important.

I don't like our representative or one of our senators. How do I handle that?

There's no doubt that it can be difficult to work with an elected official with whom you disagree on issues. But that can be the case when working with donors too. In both situations, focusing on the goal—getting the "donor" to say yes—is critical. You're representing AFP and the fundraising community and possibly talking about the impact of legislation on your community. Politics can be personal, yes, but this is a professional activity you're undertaking in order to advance fundraising and your ability to generate support for your organization.

What if I can't participate in Virtual Lobby Week?

AFP also plans to have a letter/email writing campaign that week. If you can't participate in a meeting, we'll provide templates messages and urge you to contact your members of Congress in support of our priorities during that week.

How do we begin?

Head to <https://afpglobal.org/chapterleaderguide> to get all the resources and get started. And you can always email paffairs@afpglobal.org with any questions!