



AFP Chapter Lobby Week 2023: October 2-6, 2023

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Chapter Lobby Week?

It's the week when AFP chapter leaders in the U.S. schedule at least one meeting (if not more) with their Members of Congress — either one (or more) of their local U.S. Representatives or one of their two U.S. Senators.

What are we supposed to talk about with them?

AFP is asking chapters to discuss our key legislative priority this year: restoration and expansion of the universal charitable deduction. AFP has worked hard to get bicameral, bipartisan legislation introduced called the *Charitable Act* (S. 566/H.R. 3435).

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

AFP will have a fact sheet, letters of support, and talking points about the legislation as well as resources to help you set up, coordinate and attend these meetings (our chapter toolkit). We're also planning a Zoom webinar for chapters and members to hear from AFP's registered lobbyist who can provide updates, answer questions and offer tips and guidance along with members from AFP's Government Relations Committee.

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 live 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 Chapter 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.

Should we meet virtually or in-person?

We recommend in-person meetings while Members are back home for this week known as "District Work Period" but if it is easier to get chapter members together (and you can work to get members from different parts of the Congressional district or state), you can ask for a virtual meeting. A virtual meeting may be with the DC-based tax staffer (since the Charitable Act falls under Ways & Means jurisdiction as a tax issue) who is used to virtual meetings. For these meetings, it is key to let the scheduler know that you are from the state/district and constituents and all members of AFP, a professional association of more than 27,000 members.

How many members can and should participate?

Since office space may be limited and 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. If you have more chapter members, have a clear script and plan for who will be the speakers. We recommend the same size for virtual meetings too.

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 and encouraging charitable giving.

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, 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. Also, in the state, the District Director is usually very close to the Member (driving with them for hours to events) and can be helpful facilitating letters of support for federal grant applications or helping with any federal agency requests.

I don't like the political beliefs of one of my members of Congress. 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 Chapter 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 template 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/lobbyweek2023> to get all the resources and get started. And you can always email paffairs@afpglobal.org with any questions!