



FASEB Guide to Hosting a Lab Visit by a Member of Congress

Inviting your members of Congress (or their staff) to visit your laboratory is a terrific way to show your elected officials some of the exciting research that is occurring in their district and state, and educate them about the importance of federal research investments. In the longer term, this kind of personal contact will help you cultivate working relationships with your elected officials and, in turn, enables your elected officials to become champions for basic research.

Below are materials and advice for setting up a laboratory visit. We encourage you to personalize your messages and activities to suit the scientific issues that are of importance to you.

How to Schedule a Visit

- Send an email or call the local office of your Representative or Senator to invite them to visit your lab (**Sample invitation email is below**)
 - Use the “[Find Officials](#)” tool on the FASEB website to look up the contact information for state/local offices
 - In your message, be sure to include the location of your institution, a brief description of your laboratory and its work, and the dates and times when you will be available to host the member of Congress
- Reach out to your institutional office of federal relations. They may have additional advice about contacting your members of Congress and setting up a visit
- Reach out to FASEB to discuss timely political/policy events that you may want to raise during the visit

Hosting a Member of Congress

- Work with your institutional offices
 - Contact your academic unit’s dean for research to help make arrangements
 - Before visiting a research facility on campus other than your own laboratory, be sure to ask/coordinate with the director of that facility
 - If you plan on visiting an animal facility, get in touch with the appropriate [Institutional Official](#) to get permission to tour the facility
 - Work with your department, school, and/or dean’s office to coordinate logistics (e.g. directions, parking, security, etc.)
 - Reach out to your institution’s communications office to facilitate any press, media, etc.
- Give the member of Congress an engaging tour of your research facility
 - Introduce them to the members of your laboratory/department/institute

- Describe in simple terms what you are studying and why it is interesting and important for discovery, how it advances health, how it will lead to technological breakthroughs, etc.
- Emphasize the importance of support you receive from the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation, or other federal agencies that allows you to conduct your research
- Give your students and postdocs an opportunity to speak about their work and contributions to the lab
 - This gives them a great opportunity to work on communicating their work in an accessible way (i.e. “the elevator pitch”)
 - It also allows them to discuss how federal funding for research supports the training of scientists
 - Elected officials will be excited to hear from younger scientists and students
- Compelling visuals are a plus! Show off laboratory equipment, computing or imaging facilities, interesting organisms, or anything else that goes beyond describing your research verbally. A simple handout can also help communicate the big ideas you are studying
- **A Note on Photographs:** A photo-op is a great way to highlight the visit and the work that your laboratory is doing. That said, please keep the following in mind:
 - Some parts of campus might have policies that restrict photographs; please inquire with your academic unit about any such prohibitions before photos are taken
 - It is important to ensure that photos of your lab/institution are used appropriately. We advise that you politely ask congressional staff not to use photographs without explicit permission regarding how they are to be used

After the Visit

- Send a thank you note to your elected officials for visiting your laboratory.
 - Be sure to mention the highlights of the visit
 - Provide any additional information if it was requested
 - If you have other materials about your area of research that are suitable for a non-technical audience, feel free to pass along those as well
- Offer to be a resource to your officials so that they can call upon your expert advice in the future

Tips and Other Advice

- Members of Congress are usually in their home states and districts during congressional recesses. Upcoming recesses include:
 - July 30- September 3, 2018 (House of Representatives)
 - August 6-10, 2018 (Senate)

- Phone and email are the best ways to contact congressional offices. Postal mail to congressional offices is subject to delays
- When looking up your elected officials, try both your home and office addresses. Sometimes your laboratory and home might be in different congressional districts. If that is the case, feel free to reach out to both your home representative and the representative whose district contains your institution
- If you don't get a response from your first message, follow-up with a phone call or additional correspondence. Congressional offices are very busy and simply might have overlooked your first request
- Be sure to respond to your elected officials promptly and clearly
- **If the member of Congress is unavailable, don't hesitate to invite staff members.** The most important thing is to inform and cultivate relationships with the offices of your elected officials and communicate with them about the importance of federal investments in research
- When describing your research, emphasize the big picture, especially why your work is important to society.
- Be friendly! Smile a lot and pay close attention to the visitor's questions, giving them your full attention. A good showing during the visit may make the legislator's staff more likely to recommend you when specific expertise or knowledge is needed.
- Don't hesitate to reach out to FASEB staff to help you at any stage of the congressional visit

Sample invitation email:

Subject line: Invitation to visit our laboratory at [Institution Name]

Dear Representative/Senator _____,

My name is ____ and I am a researcher at [Institution Name]. It is my great pleasure to invite you and your staff to visit our laboratory and see first-hand some of the cutting-edge research that we are doing to advance [description of your research area]. Moreover, the visit will give us the opportunity to show you how federal investments in research are advancing knowledge and enhancing the welfare of our community, state, and the nation.

Our laboratory is located at [address] and we would be happy to host you on [dates/times], or at another time, depending on your availability. During your visit, you will also have the opportunity to meet with [names of specific persons at your institution who may be in attendance, e.g. department chair, federal relations, staff, etc.]

Thank you for your service and I look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

[Your Name, Title, and Mailing Address]