

SRI International



CIRCL Hill Visits

Communicating with Congress

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Who are the policy makers?

- While Members make the final decisions and do the voting, the Congressional staff are, in many cases, more important
 - They advise the Members and they influence the Members' decisions
 - Mile wide, inch-deep understanding of many issues – they are responsible for large legislative portfolios
- Many Congressional staffers are young (average age bracket—20's)
- Average time on Hill is probably 3-4 years
- Most have no background in science-related or education-related issues (not counting political science of course...!!)



Why it's important to communicate with them...

- They Don't Know!
 - Hear mostly from Research & Related Activities (R&RA) arm of NSF and not much from the Education (EHR) arm
- Tight fiscal environment
 - Sequestration keeping budgets flat or worse
- Must fight for every dollar
 - If you don't, someone else will
- Crucial to inform Members (their staff) that sit on relevant committees of jurisdiction
 - House Science Committee/Senate Commerce Committee (authorize programs—policy focused)
 - House & Senate Commerce/Justice/Science Appropriations Subcommittees (check writers)



What do they care about and how do you reach them?

- They care about the impact that issues/policies have in their state/district
- All about re-election and perception/image back in state/district
- Explain to them the impact the issue has nationally, BUT emphasize impact locally
 - What does the program mean to Member's state/district
- Explain in concise, simple and non-technical terms:
 - The success of program
 - The impact without the program



- Questions?

Thank You

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