



NAHRO 2024

Hill Day Tool Kit



Dear NAHRO Advocate,

As the Chair of the Legislative Network Committee, I write to welcome you to NAHRO's 2024 Capitol Hill Day! Whether you're a first-time participant or a seasoned veteran, we are excited to have you with us! As you prepare for your visit to our nation's capitol and to meet with your Members of Congress, please know that the work you're doing is so much greater than any one of us. When you opted in for Capitol Hill Day, you opted in to be a voice for the communities you serve everyday and for that we are truly grateful.

The goal of Capitol Hill Day is not just to meet or speak with your Member of Congress, it is to build lasting working relationships with them. These relationships take time and have ups and downs like any relationship, but they always start with conversations. Although advocacy is done in many ways, there is no substitute for face-to-face meetings with our elected officials! As you meet with your Members of Congress and their staff, it is important to keep in mind that in addition to being an affordable housing professional, you are still a constituent. I challenge you to connect with your elected officials in ways that go beyond affordable housing policy and that you're able to connect as people.

Once again, I thank you for your work, your time, and your commitment to the important work of speaking up for the residents and communities we serve! When NAHRO uses its voice, Washington listens and that is because of you!

Ivory Mathews

Chair, Legislative Network Advisory Committee

Hill Day is an excellent opportunity for NAHRO members from all corners of the nation to showcase the joys and challenges of your communities to officials in Washington. I challenge you to show up authentically, speak with intentionality, and collaborate strategically for the greatest collective impact on the communities we serve across the country. Remember: we are strong as individuals but powerful together.

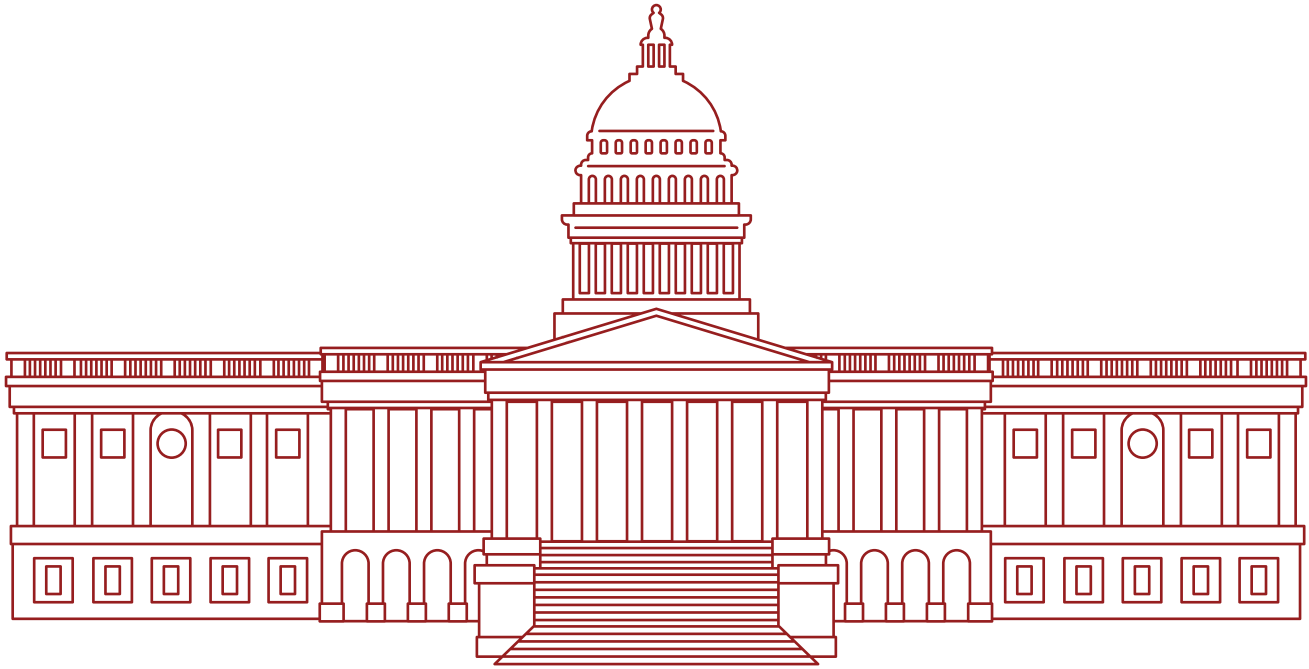
~ George Guy

NAHRO Nation, your voice makes a difference every day for our residents, communities and agencies. When you advocate for adequate funding and programs, you are advocating for the individuals we serve and the communities in which we reside. I thank and applaud you for using your voice to make a difference for those that feel voiceless!

~ Sean Gilbert, PHM, SPHM

NAHRO members: when you join the conversation on Hill Day, you amplify our everyday advocacy efforts tenfold. Your stories and lived experiences have the power to cut through the noise of Washington and demonstrate the vital nature of your work. Help NAHRO drive home the message: Housing is essential to thriving communities!

~ Mark Thiele



What is Capitol Hill Day?

Capitol Hill Day is an annual opportunity for NAHRO membership to engage with members of Congress on Capitol Hill during the Washington Conference. As a leading association of affordable housing and community development professionals, NAHRO has a respected voice in Washington D.C. One of the most effective ways to use that voice to advocate for our policy priorities is through in-person meetings. By leveraging our national network of members, NAHRO can make our shared priorities real for legislators and their staff. When NAHRO raises its voice, D.C. listens, and that is in large part because of the work you are doing.

Why is it Important to Engage with Members of Congress?

Members of Congress prioritize constituent engagement. In addition to holding members of Congress accountable, constituents help Congressional offices stay on top of what is important to their communities. At NAHRO, we are uniquely positioned to leverage our collective voice to inform and advocate for affordable housing funding and programs.

You do not have to be an expert on affordable housing or community development policy, nor do your members of Congress expect you to be. What is most important to them is hearing your perspective within our industry, the experiences of your residents, and action items that their office can realistically execute.

What if my member of Congress does not attend the Capitol Hill Day meeting?

Members of Congress are sometimes unable to attend constituent meetings due to scheduling conflicts. When this happens, you will meet with staffers that cover housing for that office. It may feel disappointing to miss out on connecting face-to-face with your elected officials. However, staffers are critical to the work that gets done on the Hill and act on behalf of your member of Congress.





Preparation for a Successful Office Visit

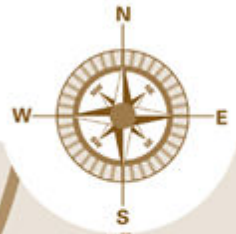
There are a wide range of steps you and your team can take to prepare for a positive engagement with a member office. Here some suggestions:

1. Things to Know about Member Offices and the U.S. Capitol Campus

- a. The House Office Buildings (HOB): Canon, Ford, Longworth, and Rayburn. The Senate Office Buildings (SOB): Hart, Russell, and Dirksen. There is a small train that operates between the Senate buildings and connects to the Longworth HOB. (See map on the following page.)
- b. You may enter House and Senate Office buildings freely upon passing a metal detector. It is a good practice to inform the office or your point of contact that you have arrived so they can prepare for your arrival and send a staffer to guide you if necessary.
- c. Capitol Police are a great resource for finding your way around and they're all very friendly especially to visitors. If you get lost or need directions they're happy to help.
- d. Offices on Capitol Hill are typically very busy, and members have very limited time most days. In-person meetings may generally last between 15-30 minutes.
- e. Members and/or staff may also be late coming from another appointment, meeting, hearing, a vote, etc. Maximizing your time is critical and being flexible can go a long way.
- f. Congressional offices vary in size based on the seniority of the member. A freshman member office is generally smaller than that of a longstanding member. This is important to account for when determining the size of your group.
- g. Navigating Capitol Hill requires a lot of walking. You'll probably see plenty of members of Congress walking to and from hearings, meetings, the floor, etc. Be prepared to "get your steps in!" Be prepared to rest when you need to.
- h. There are stairways and elevators in each of the House Office Buildings. Certain elevators are reserved for use by members of Congress and top-level staff, especially during votes.
- i. If you require a wheelchair, please contact the office you're visiting so that they can arrange that service for you.
- j. If you are staying at the Hyatt Regency (conference hotel), all the office buildings should be within walking or taxi distance. If you are staying elsewhere in DC, public transportation is available with three Metro stops within walking distance of Capitol Hill:
 - Capitol South—Located at First Street between C and D Streets, SE (House Side)
 - Federal Center, SW—Located at the southwest corner of Third and D Streets, SW (House Side)
 - Union Station—Located at First Street, NW, and Massachusetts Avenue (Senate Side)

U.S. CAPITOL

Visitor Center



Legend			
	Accessible Entrance		Elevators
	Accessible Route		Parking
	Visitor Services Shuttle		Bus Pick-Up
	Circulator Bus Stop		Bus Drop-Off
			Metro Station



For more information on Capiotl Hill accessibility services:

[CLICK HERE](#)

2. Researching The Member

- a. Every member of Congress has a website that contains personal biographies, a map of their district, policy stances, archived press releases and more. This background information can be helpful when formulating questions.
- b. Referencing parts of a member's biography, especially a shared connection you may have, shows that you have done your research and can help establish an anchor point to connect as people and not solely as advocate to policy maker. You could share a common school, military service, neighborhood, etc. Establishing a personal connection can be invaluable to growing and maintaining a long-term partnership.
- c. Learn more about the members' committee assignments and work they've done in those areas that may have a tie-in to your own work or to affordable housing more broadly.



3. Crafting Your Message:

- a. Member offices meet with constituents all the time. They expect your message to be reasonable, organized, and most importantly clear. Planning out your talking points with your group in advance is important to maximize the limited time you will have with the office.
- b. An effective and memorable way to organize your message is to allow different members from your group to articulate the part(s) of the message that most closely relate to their lived experience/expertise.
- c. Your requests should be specific and within the power of the office you're in. Asking a member office to support specific legislation is reasonable. Asking a member office to fix the affordable housing crisis is not.
- d. What you are saying needs to be supported by up-to-date and accurate information that you can share with the office. Members and staff have a lot to deal with already, making the information tied to your advocacy as accessible as possible is key to seeing meaningful action later. Providing the member or staff NAHRO's Policy Priorities and Legislative and Regulatory Agenda can help make sure everyone remembers the key points raised in your meeting.
- e. Know the status of the legislation or issue(s) you're advocating for. Refer to a bill by its bill number when appropriate, or at least have this information available because they will likely ask.



4. Considering Your Team:

- a. When determining your group for a hill visit, it is important to have a diversity of voices on the issue at hand. Providing multiple vantage points of the same issue makes the issue multi-dimensional and illustrates its importance.
- b. Plan out who will lead the meeting and who will cover which talking points so there is no uncertainty or overlapping speakers.
- c. Congressional staff meet with many groups during a legislative session. Your Capitol Hill Day will more than likely take place while the office is “in session” meaning a busy office will be juggling meetings, sometimes at competing times. This is why your group’s flexibility is important. Be prepared to meet in the office, in the hallway, a nearby cafeteria, outside of the office building, etc. Flexibility will be appreciated and remembered by staffers and will help build a long-term partnership with them.



5. Your Visit:

- a. Like any first meeting, you’ll need to introduce yourself. If you are the designated leader of your group, you’ll want to prepare a brief introduction of yourself, your group, and your reason for being there. Do not take it upon yourself to speak entirely for the group or talk over members of your group.
- b. From there, each member of your group should introduce themselves and where they’re from and share a brief connection to the member’s district/constituency (i.e. from the district, work in the district, went to school in the district, heard the member speak somewhere, etc.)
- c. Starting with a positive note is ideal, you’re meeting with them in their office with a request. You could thank the member or thank the staffer for the member’s support on legislation related to the policy issue you’re there for.
- d. Do your best to make it through all the points of your message, but don’t be afraid to pause. Your meeting can be more conversational if you leave room for the member and their staff to ask questions and provide feedback.
- e. Don’t exaggerate or mislead. If you do not know something, you do not know something. Politely say that you’re unsure and that you will follow up. You can always follow up with the correct information after the meeting, which also creates an organic way to connect with the office on the issue after your visit.
- f. Members of Congress often appreciate opportunities to take a photo with their constituents. You can end the meeting on a positive note by thanking the member or staffer for their time and asking if the group could take a picture. (Remember, their time is limited so it is more common practice to take a group photo instead of individual pictures.)
- g. During and after your visit, be sure to provide easy to read literature, like NAHRO’s Legislative & Regulatory Agenda and other documents from your agency, to highlight important facts, figures, and arguments.

6. Capitol Hill Day Follow Up:

- a. Always send a follow-up email thanking the member and staff for meeting with you. It is a small thing that can easily keep the conversation going and help to establish the long-term partnership between you and the staff.
 - b. One of the most important things you can do following a visit is to provide any information or resources you promised to send after the meeting. Following up makes it more likely that your information will be disseminated to the member and relevant staff.
 - c. If there are events in your area that may be relevant to the topics discussed at your meeting, invite the member and their appropriate staff. Even if they cannot attend, this is a good gesture that will be remembered and opens the line of communication for you to invite them to future events.
 - d. Invite the member and staff to a site-visit, and make sure to let NAHRO’s Legislative Affairs team know if they take you up on the invitation!
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NAHRO Leadership:

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Sean Gilbert, PHM, SPHM

NAHRO Senior Vice President
Executive Director Tennessee Valley Housing Services
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Mark Thiele

NAHRO Chief Executive Officer

Ivory Matthews

NAHRO Legislative Network Advisory Committee Chair
Chief Executive Officer, Home Forward
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About NAHRO:

NAHRO, established in 1933, is a membership organization of more than 26,000 housing and community development providers and professionals throughout the United States. NAHRO members create and manage affordable housing for low- and middle-income families and support vibrant communities that enhance the quality of life for all. They administer more than 3 million homes for more than 8 million people.

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