

Alliance for Nuclear Accountability's DC Days 2009

Team Meeting Etiquette

During DC Days Team Meetings, groups of ANA activists sit down with Senators, Representatives Congressional staff, and administration officials. Seasoned activists are chosen as Team Leaders to facilitate the sessions. A limited number of spaces are available for each meeting.

Team Meetings have three purposes:

- Raise awareness of our issues.
- Learn new information from the people we meet with: this must be recorded in the Debriefing Form for later use.
- Ask for something: The most productive meetings are those that have a specific request. Even if you get turned down, the response gives ANA information that is valuable.

BEFORE THE MEETING

Know Your Stuff: Take time to read the draft fact sheets provided in your Participants Packet before the Sunday Training. Pick one or two issues to focus on and learn about. Know the major points that you are trying to make. Be prepared to respond to questions and refute contrary positions.

Attending the Sunday Training is Mandatory. At the Sunday training ANA will brief you on the target issues and the “Asks” we will be raising with policy-makers. It’s a great place to hone your message.

Pre-meetings are held before every Team Meeting in order to ensure that the group’s messages are clear and the presentation is orderly. At the Pre-meeting the Team Leader will determine the issues to be discussed, the order of speakers, and who will take notes. The Team Leader will provide new or additional information about the person you are meeting with which will help you in the meeting.

You Cannot Attend a Team Meeting Unless You Have Gone to the Pre-meeting or received permission from the Team Leader. Do not try and crash a meeting to which you have not been included.

Plan Your Ask: Be sure you know and understand what you are asking the official to do and that it is within their power. Examples of “Asks” are – co-sponsor a bill, sign or write a letter, or provide information. We are more credible as a group if we know the system.

IN THE MEETING

Be on Time. If you are delayed for any reason and don’t get to a Team Meeting in time to start with everyone else, DO NOT try to join the meeting late. If you can’t make it on time, don’t go.

Stick to the Message. Be clear about who will say what, and stay on point. Don’t ramble or get sidetracked.

Be Aware of Time. The Team Leader will confirm how long the Team Meeting will run so that participants know how much time each speaker has. Make your point as concisely as possible. Be aware of the needs of your fellow meeting participants and don’t hog all the time. Don’t read documents that you can hand to the person. Turn over documents and the Briefing Book at the end of the meeting

Ask for Something Specific. Be polite and be persistent. Try to walk away with a clear sense that the person DID or DID NOT agree. Most offices will try to be vague. Don't let them.

Ask for what is in their power. Make sure your request is within the legal or bureaucratic authority of the person you are meeting. There isn't much point in asking a Representative to co-sponsor a Senate bill. It's fine to push for actions that are beyond the political (or moral!) reach of your target, but requests should at least theoretically be possible in the legal/bureaucratic sense.

Remember Whom You Represent. DC Days is organized by the Alliance for Nuclear Accountability, and meetings are set up under our name. ANA is a network that encompasses peace, environmental and community groups. We work well together because we have agreed upon common positions. At a Team Meeting, please don't advocate positions beyond what ANA supports.

AFTER THE MEETING

Take time to debrief as a team and fill out the form provided. It is important to be sure everyone has a similar understanding of what took place. Please write clearly on the Debriefing Form. This form is one of the major products from DC Days and will aid us in doing work the rest of the year to further our issues and goals.

- Fill out the debriefing form, as a group if possible, and turn it in to the DC Days headquarters. (A dedicated computer will be available at headquarters for typing in the form, please have someone do so if possible).
- Identify the topics discussed in the meeting, as well as any new information learned- including the member of administration or Congress' stance on the issues discussed
- Identify all commitments made by the person you met with
- Identify what material your team committed to providing and who will be in charge of getting that material sent to the office you met with.
- Assign someone to write a thank you note.

TEAM LEADER RESPONSIBILITIES

Pre Meeting: Set the pre-meeting time and place, and update team members with scheduling changes. Facilitate the pre-meeting, decide presenters and speaking order, and assign a note taker.

Manage the team's presence at the meeting location: This means announcing the team's arrival to office staff.

Time: Always ask how much time you have at the beginning of the meeting, and then manage the allocated time closely. Turn over a Briefing Kit and other relevant materials at the meeting's end.

Debriefing Form: Ensure that the debriefing form is filled out and returned to DC Days headquarters.

Follow up: Make sure that the thank you note has been sent and that any other promised information has been provided.