

# IN-DISTRICT MEETINGS WITH MEMBERS OF CONGRESS OR STAFF



**S**cheduling an in-district meeting with your member of Congress or their staff during “in-district work periods” – a phrase referring to periods when Congress is in recess – is a highly effective advocacy tactic. Whether you already have a relationship with your member of Congress or are meeting with their office for the first time, an in-district meeting is a powerful relationship-building experience you can draw on over the months and years to come.

Of course, operate within your own safety guidelines during the pandemic when considering in-person meetings to discuss housing issues or inviting congressional offices to visit homes built with federal resources. Some organizations and individuals, particularly in areas with high vaccination rates, are showing a greater openness to direct interactions when masks are worn and social distancing is practiced. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) produces periodic guidance for hosting small and large gatherings. A January 2022 resource from the CDC can be found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/gatherings.html>. Virtual meetings with members of Congress and their staffs offer an alternative method many advocates are already utilizing.

## GETTING STARTED

- Locate the phone numbers for the district offices of your representative and senators. NLIHC staff can help with this; just contact [your organizer](#) on the NLIHC field team or email [outreach@nlihc.org](mailto:outreach@nlihc.org).
- If possible, recruit three to four advocates from other organizations dedicated to alleviating poverty and expanding access to affordable, decent, and accessible homes for your community.
- Call each congressional office and ask to speak with a scheduler. Tell the scheduler who you are, that you are a constituent, and what organization you are affiliated with. Inform them that you and leaders from other organizations would like to meet with the congressman and/or a staffer from their office during the upcoming in-district work period.

## PLANNING LOGISTICS

- Use the event as an opportunity to share how federal housing resources are used in their district and local communities and to raise awareness of the homelessness and housing poverty crisis.
- Prepare talking points! NLIHC’s factsheet and talking points on the importance of Housing First as a solution to the homelessness crisis are available at: <https://nlihc.org/explore-issues/housing-programs/housing-first>
- A mix of personal stories and data to explain the importance of affordable housing can be powerful.
- Prepare other advocates attending the meeting by sharing talking points with them, hosting a call to review the talking points, and determining who will speak about which topics.
- Review and print NLIHC’s State Housing Profiles and Congressional District Profiles and bring any applicable informational materials from your organization. State-specific NLIHC materials can be found at: <https://nlihc.org/housing-needs-by-state>

## AFTER THE EVENT

- As the meeting ends, ask for a picture. Then tweet and post this picture with the #HoUsed hashtag.
- Be sure to confirm any agreed-upon actions. Be sure to thank members of Congress once again.
- Send your members of Congress and their staffs a follow-up email to provide additional information in a clear and concise manner. Include any fact sheets on the topic or other specific information they asked for during the meeting.
- If you can, continue your advocacy throughout the month and beyond, building a rapport with the office in an ongoing way.
- Share with NLIHC staff what you learned in your meeting. The feedback you hear from members of Congress and their staffs will inform future NLIHC meetings with congressional offices.

**For more information, contact NLIHC Manager of Field Organizing Brooke Schipporeit at [bschipporeit@nlihc.org](mailto:bschipporeit@nlihc.org).**