

# How to approach congressional staffers SO OUR ISSUES ARE HEARD

We get it. It can be stressful to engage congressional offices on Palestinian rights issues.

The key to getting your issues heard begins with sustained engagement with staffers. They are the critical link between you and their bosses. They are often the experts their bosses rely on for knowledge and advice on a given issue. So, how do you best approach them to get your issues front and center?

Here are some tips:

- 1. Be upfront with your ask.** Know the upsides of your ask and any potential downsides. Role play and rehearse your talking points so you can effortlessly adapt your message to make your ask as clear and strong as possible.
- 2. Be considerate.** Remember, just because your issue is the most important thing on your agenda, it most likely isn't on theirs. Be persistent in your follow-ups, but don't forget to recognize a staffer's typically overwhelming workload and time constraints.
- 3. Connect the issues to their district.** Staffers are most concerned about their boss's state or district. Where possible, tie issues back to the possible impact on their district.
- 4. Be able to connect to subject matter experts.** Staffers have to handle more issues now than ever before as congressional staffing has decreased over the years. The real value you can provide to a staffer is being a reliable source of information and connector to subject matter experts.
- 5. Be prepared to defend your view.** Staffers expect you to be an advocate, and they expect you to have a point of view. However, if a staffer asks you questions about what opposition thinks, be prepared to be transparent and open. Be prepared to rebut opposition talking points.
- 6. Be honest.** The goal is to build a long-term relationship with staffers. It is important that you don't mislead or share inaccurate information. Similarly, know what it is that you don't know and be okay saying as much. They need to know they can rely on you and trust you, whether you have the answer or not.
- 7. Care about what they care about.** Be prepared to think on your feet to adapt your message to address concerns the staffer brings forth. When a staffer responds to your ask with "Well, my boss is worried about 'blank.'" You should try your best to address 'blank.' If you can't address the staffer's concern on the spot, plan to circle back later with a different approach.
- 8. Ask to meet regularly and invite them to your events.** Staffers are paid to talk to people and hear constituent concerns. Email, call, and request to meet regularly. Invite staffers to in-district events or ask that they consider attending events, conferences, briefings, etc., in Washington.

Adapted from *9 Ways to Approach Congressional Staffers to Get Your Issue Heard* by Diana Manos, available at: <https://info.cq.com/resources/9-ways-to-approach-congressional-staffers/>



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