tips for conducting a meeting with a member of congress or candidate at an event/outside of the health center

* Introduce yourself and any others in your group, stating where you are from and each of your roles with the health center.
* If you are going with a group, decide in advance who will lead the discussion and what points you want to make.
* Keep your meeting short and simple. Say why you have come and outline the case for your position on a particular piece of legislation or the issues that prompted your meeting. If this is a first-time meeting with an elected official or candidate, be prepared to go over the basics of "What is a Community Health Center", including who you serve and how your serve them.
* Give examples of how any pertinent issues affect your health center and the Member of Congress' (or candidates') constituents.
* Stay focused on the two or three key messages you want to leave with the legislator. It is easy to get off-track and run out of time, particularly when dealing with seasoned politicians.
* Answer any questions asked of you. If you don't know the answer, say you don't know the answer, but will find out and get back to them.
* Leave behind any relevant materials specific to your issue and/or about your health center (such as an annual report). Include your name and contact information with the materials.
* Offer yourself as a resource to the legislator and the staff in responding to health care questions.
* Be prompt but be patient if the Member of Congress is running late. They have full schedules!
* Don't be disappointed if you end up meeting with staff, rather than the Senator or Representative. Legislators depend on advice from their staff because it is impossible for them to follow all issues themselves. Staff are gatekeepers and they can sometimes be the real driving force on an issue.