

Virtual Lobby Day: Practical Tips for Lobbying Congress

Lobbying for worker-friendly legislation and fair courts is a critical part of NELA's advocacy efforts. Your personal contact with lawmakers provides an opportunity to build relationships, educate them, and learn about their questions or concerns. For Virtual Lobby Day 2021, our two top priorities will be: the FAIR Act (S. 505/H.R. 963) (Senate Judiciary Committee, House Judiciary Committee) and advancing fair courts (Senate only).

We will also be lobbying on two other bills that are important to us, if you have time: the EMPOWER Act (will be introduced by Representative Frankel (D-FL) next week. She will likely be joined by Representative John Katko (R-NY) as a Republican co-sponsor) and the PRO Act (S. 420/H.R. 842), which has already passed in the House.

Schedule A Meeting With Your Member Of Congress

Plan to reach out as soon as you are able to do so, to ask for a meeting. If you have a personal relationship with your member of Congress, their Chief of Staff, or their Legislative Director, start with the person you know! While so many offices are still operating virtually, the most efficient way to get a meeting, if you don't already know someone to contact, is to follow the steps below.

How To Request a Meeting Via Email:

1. If you don't have a personal contact, reach out to the member's Chief of Staff.
 - [List of House Chiefs of Staff](#)
 - [List of Senate Chiefs of Staff](#)
2. Include a short introduction with your name, the fact that you are lobbying as an attorney, as a constituent, and as a NELA member, your home zip code (if you are a constituent), and your phone number.
3. **Always start with a thank you, if there is anything at all for which you can thank the Member!** Please check before going into the meeting whether your member is already a co-sponsor of the FAIR Act, EMPOWER Act, or PRO Act, and/or whether they have supported fair-minded, highly qualified judicial nominees.
4. Ask the Chief of Staff if they can meet with you or to provide the name and email address of the staffer in their office who handles Judiciary Committee matters (FAIR, Judicial Nominations) or Senate HELP Committee or House Education and Labor Committee (EMPOWER and PRO Act).
5. Email the appropriate staffer for the issue you want to focus on. You can pass along a message about other issues that they can share with the appropriate staffer.
6. Offer to set up a video conference call for your meeting.
7. [Share your meeting details with NELA.](#)

What Should I Say At My Meeting?

Staff in Washington, DC are typically policy experts. Either way, the typical meeting will last 20–30 minutes. Plan your talking points with that timeframe in mind. Find out in advance of the meeting whether your member of Congress has co-sponsored any of our Lobby Day priority bills.

- Thank them for meeting with you, and share a little bit about NELA, yourself, and your law practice.
- **If they support the bill**, thank them, engage with them so that you can learn about how strongly they support the bill and whether they have issues or concerns that you can help resolve. Let them know you will be checking in periodically to see how you can help.

- **If your legislator is opposed or still thinking it over**, find out what their key concerns are, and ask if there is information that you might be able to provide? They may want more data or to hear from other constituents. They may not understand certain aspects of the bill, and often the significance of a bill doesn't come to life until someone like you shares some real life stories.
- Let them know that you and NELA (and your Affiliate if true) strongly support the bill and why it is important. Talking with Congressional offices demands that you strike a balance—do provide stories or data that are compelling, and that the member or staffer can connect with **but keep it short**.
- Ask questions of the staffer about their member's views and concerns. The information you get will help NELA to better strategize our advocacy.
- If there is an opening, offer to follow up—with more information, with a check in on whether they have decided to support the bill, but it's great to leave with a plan to follow up.

Never Leave A Meeting Without Making An Ask!

Before leaving a meeting with a staffer, be sure to state clearly and unambiguously what you want. You may be asking the staffer to convey our thanks to the member for their support, and that you hope they will continue to support the bill. You may be asking the staffer to let the member know that you want and urge them to support the legislation. Tell them what action you want them to take. **Be specific.**

Saying that you wanted the Member to know your thoughts about this issue is not an ask.

Follow-Up (FAIR Act)

Follow-up within one to two weeks with a thank you. Be sure to follow up if you offered additional information. Feel free to share the About NELA document, the Background Document or other publications included in the FAIR Act Toolkit. Other options for follow-up:

- Provide them with more information about forced arbitration as well as your clients' stories about the impact of forced arbitration. Try to share information about how this occurs in an industry or sector in their state or district.
- Offer to have other constituents who also support the FAIR Act contact the member's office to express their support.

Report Back To NELA

Let us know who you met with, what their contact information is, and how your meeting went. Keeping track of our lobbying efforts is key to making progress on issues important to workers' rights. Report the outcome of your meeting [using our online form](#) or by sending an email to advocacy@nelahq.org.