

Some tips and guidelines for making effective contact with Congress

Think about the message you want to deliver:

- What are the tangible reasons the historical records in your archives or library (or in your region if you represent a group of archives/libraries or users) are important to preserve and make available;
- Why are historical records important to people in the member's district—to genealogists, to historians, to school teachers and students, to people who need documents to gain their benefits like social security or military services;
- What are some of the “good things” that will happen in their district if PAHR is funded;
- Check out the member's background and Congressional committees and see if there are special interests that you can connect to historical records—interest in military veterans, the environment, farms and agrarian life, particular ethnic/racial groups, small business, or issues that are the subject of the committees on which the member serves

Develop or adapt a one page fact sheet to deliver your message:

- Keep the fact sheet brief—no more than one side of one page
- Present the information in clear, concise bulleted points
- Include the following:
 - A brief statement explaining your organization
 - A brief summary of what PAHR is and will do for you/your state
 - Why PAHR matters to you
 - What your member of Congress can do

Make contact in writing. Develop a one page summary letter and fax it along with your fact sheet to the member's Washington office:

- Begin by asking straight out that the member sign on as a sponsor for the PAHR legislation;
- Tell them you are a voter in the district;
- Summarize your message, and be passionate about why you think it is important to get this bill passed;
- Ask them again to sign on as a sponsor and give them the contact information for doing that (contact Mike Iger in Congressman Hinchey's office at Michael.iger@mail.house.gov or 202-225-6335)

Make LIVE contact. Call the member's office and review with a person there the points in your summary letter. Here's who to talk to:

- If you call the regional office, ask for the Regional Office Director. If you get a receptionist, tell them you want to talk to the Regional Office Director about legislation that is currently in the Oversight and Government Reform Committee. Make an appointment to talk by phone with the Office Director if necessary. Keep calling until you get them to speak with you. Be sure to ask the person you speak with to urge the member to sign on as a sponsor.
- If you call the member's Washington DC office, ask for the Legislative Director and follow the same process as in the previous bullet.
- After you speak with the person, fax a letter to the member of Congress thanking them for the opportunity to talk with the staff person (give the person's name) and note how helpful and interested the person was. That letter is likely to make its way to the attention of the member!

Make even MORE LIVE contact. Call the member's regional office or Washington office and make an appointment to talk to either the Regional Office Director or the Legislative Director in person. This is really the most effective way to lock down that support.

- What to bring: Use a brightly colored folder with a PAHR label on the front so they will "see" it more easily. Don't put too much in it—it will be ignored because they just don't have time to read a lot of stuff.
- Include: your fact sheet; a copy of the bill; a sheet indicating who to contact to sign on as a supporter. If you know the member has particular interest in some topic or person, include a nice facsimile of one or two (no more) eye-catching documents relating to that interest.
- Expect to meet with a staff member—getting to see the member is great, but not always possible. The staffer can get the sponsorship you need, and they can be very helpful. Expect to meet for maybe 10-15 minutes. That's enough to get the message and your request across.

And a few reassurances:

- Members expect to be asked to do things for their constituents. So ask, and if you need to, ask them again, then again. Until they say absolutely no, keep asking.
- Members and their staff want to help their constituents. They really like to see you in there much more than lobbyists.
- You can't get support if you don't ask for it.

Let us know how it all went—if you have questions, just get in touch. We're here to help.

Contact the PAHR Task Force at: pahr@statearchivists.org