

# CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE VISIT HOW-TO

*Face-to-face, personal meetings are often more effective than just letters or phone calls. Your presence in your legislator's office shows a high level of concern. Set up a visit and bring a friend! The more people you have with you who are united on an issue, the more impact your visit will have.*

## Setting up a Meeting

- **Who and When to Call**

Look in your phonebook for the number to your congressperson's local office, or call your local elections office if you're not sure who your Representative or Senator is. If you want to go to the Washington DC office, call the Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121.

Ask to set up a date and time to meet with your legislator – **this often requires 6-8 weeks advance notice**. If a meeting is too hard to get, or you don't want to wait that long, ask to speak with an aide. The aide will take notes from the meeting and pass it along to the congressperson. Be sure to follow-up with the aide and ask them if they received a response from the congressperson.

## Getting Prepared

- **Background**

It's often helpful to write out what you want to say ahead of time. See WVE's "General Talking Points" for a good place to start. You can also check out the WVE website. Here are some helpful links.

**Safe Cleaning Products Initiative:**

[www.womenandenvironment.org/campaignsandprograms/SafeCleaning/index\\_html](http://www.womenandenvironment.org/campaignsandprograms/SafeCleaning/index_html)

**Household Hazards report and fact sheets:**

[www.womenandenvironment.org/campaignsandprograms/SafeCleaning/ResourcesCleaning](http://www.womenandenvironment.org/campaignsandprograms/SafeCleaning/ResourcesCleaning)

- **Make It Personal**

Share a personal experience if you have one. Maybe you or your child has asthma and you're concerned about asthma attacks triggered by cleaners. These experiences are the ones that resonate most. If you don't have a personal story, share with the congressperson the reasons why you hosted a Green Cleaning Party.

## At the Meeting

- **What to Say**

Ask for specific action from your legislator! Example: "I'm urging you to take action to require companies to disclose ingredients on their product labels," or "I encourage you to introduce legislation that requires companies to prove their products are safe before they can be sold on the market."

Explain why you are passionate about this issue and why your Congressperson should support your concerns.

Thank them for their time.

- **Leave Information with the Congressperson**

Bring some printed material to leave with the congressperson or aide. Feel free to use WVE's Congressional Information Packet. You can also look for a newspaper or magazine article about toxic chemicals in household cleaning products and bring that in.

You may have a 15-minute meeting or only 3 minutes. Be ready for both situations!