Washington can have a huge impact on your business. Facility tours remain the single best way for lawmakers to understand the industry and for IFDA members to build relationships.

STEP 1 - Getting Started

Schedule the date. Contact the legislator’s office, or ask IFDA to make the request. Contact information can be found on the lawmakers’ individual websites on www.house.gov or www.senate.gov. This process can sometimes take months; don’t take it personally if you have to repeat the invitation.

Learn about the Congressman. Once a date is set, IFDA will send you background information about the legislator, such as committees the legislator serves on, bills the legislator has co-sponsored, as well as personal information where you might find you share a common connection. If there is an issue we need you to mention, IFDA will provide talking points.

Prepare employees. Let them know about the visit and where in the facility you are planning to tour. Explain why you are doing this and any issues that have an impact on your business.

Plan on photography. You do not need a professional photographer, but have someone take a few good quality pictures during the visit. IFDA would like to use a photo when reporting on the visit and you may want to report on the visit as well.

If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact us at (703)532-9400.
Jon Eisen, SVP, Government Relations jeisen@ifdaonline.org
Carolyn West, Mgr., Government Relations cwest@ifdaonline.org
**STEP 2 - Conducting the Visit**

**Designate a welcoming committee** and have them waiting in the lobby to greet the representative.

**Start in a conference room.** Introduce everyone and explain what you have planned for the visit. If appropriate thank him for any recent votes that IFDA has tracked.

**Explain briefly about the foodservice industry and how the supply chain works.** IFDA has a helpful infographic with talking points you might consider.

**Tell your story.** Talk about your business, what you do, how many people you employ, who your customers are.

**Talk briefly about your community involvement,** any charity work your company participates in or any special programs you run.

**Conduct a tour of the offices and the warehouse.** Allow the legislator to shake hands with employees and briefly talk about their jobs.

If time permits and the legislator is amenable, **give him a time and a place to address the employees** and take questions.

**Thank the legislator** for their time as you show them out.

**STEP 3 - Follow Up**

**Let IFDA know how the visit went** — send us pictures and some details.

**Send a written thank you note to the district office,** include pictures.

**Send a picture to the local newspaper.** IFDA can provide you with media contact information and a brief paragraph if you would like.

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**FAQ’s**

**Do I need to know what issues are in Congress?**
No — you are teaching them about your business. What are the critical industry issues? IFDA will be happy to provide talking points on our top 2 or 3 issues.

**What if I don’t know the answer to a question?**
It is perfectly fine to say you need to get back to them with an answer. In fact, following up is another great way to keep in contact.

**The district director is coming, not the congressman. Is this a snub?**
Not at all. The legislator may be overbooked and the district director is a great person to know. Sometimes he or she is an even better contact; staff can be more accessible.

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**Additional Ways to Stay in Touch**

**Invite the member to a company event:** a food show, staff picnic or ribbon cutting.

**Keep them informed.** When you put out a press release about something you did in the community — send it to the district office.

**Attend a town hall meeting.** Many congressmen hold these throughout the year. IFDA can let you know when there is one scheduled in your area.

**Visit the district office.** There are regular open office hours. This is also a great way to get to know the district staff. This is best when there is an important issue pending or you need help.

**Attend IFDA’s Washington Conference.** Every May, IFDA offers you a chance to come to Washington and meet with your representative in his office.

**Attend a fundraiser.** After the visit, you may get a campaign solicitation. Participation is up to you — it’s another opportunity to connect with the legislator.