

Tips for Conducting a Successful Facility Tour for Members of Congress

Hosting a tour of your facility for Members of Congress to highlight the importance a highway bill to your company is a very effective tool. A tour will not only allow you to demonstrate the role your business plays in the local economy, it also gives you a great opportunity to develop a closer relationship with your elected officials. Consider the following points when planning your tour.

Planning the Tour

- **Issue the invitation in writing.**
Offer a range of dates to accommodate busy legislative schedules; dates during congressional recesses are especially appropriate. If the Congress is in session in Washington, ask for an appointment on a Monday or Friday, when Members of Congress are often back in their home districts.
- **Announce the legislator's visit to all employees.**
Once the tour is confirmed, promote it throughout the company by distributing a brief biography of the legislator and information about the legislator's importance.
- **Alert local media of tour and connection to the Start Us Up USA! Campaign.**
- **Arrange for photographs during the tour.**
Work closely with the legislator's press aide on publicity and news coverage.
- **Provide the legislator with information on your company prior to the visit.**
For example, include the total number of employees, the products your company manufactures, and the amount of sales.
- **Choose the tour guide with care.**
The guide should be articulate, knowledgeable about operations as well as the issue, the company, and know by name everyone the legislator is likely to meet.
- **Map out the tour.**
Develop a tour schedule and route that illustrates the importance of a highway bill reauthorization. Know when the legislator has to depart, and allow for extra time if the legislator wants to remain longer in one location.
- **Prepare key equipment and safety gear ahead of time.**
Ensure that equipment is operating to provide action interest. Provide safety gear to all participants when necessary.
- **Rehearse the tour the day before.**
It may be helpful for participants to answer possible questions to prepare for issues the legislator might raise.

Conducting the Tour

- **Begin the visit in your office.**
Provide the legislator with an overview of important facts about your company's facilities, your current business situation, layoffs, lower sales, etc...
- **Talk in quiet areas along the way.**
Be careful to avoid overwhelming the legislator with more technical or economic data than an interested layperson can absorb.
- **Be sure to introduce employees the legislator encounters during the tour.**
Remember, employees are the legislator's constituents. Also be sure to introduce all those with whom the legislator has a personal or political relationship.
- **Conclude the tour with an employee meeting.**
A discussion provides an opportunity to answer the legislator's questions and reemphasize the critical need for a multi-year reauthorization of the highway bill to spur demand for your company's products.

Following the Tour

- **Send a thank you note to the legislator.**
Always thank the legislator in writing. Reiterate the points discussed during the visit.
- **Forward electronic versions of photographs taken during the tour to the legislator and press secretary.**
- **Send press clips about the visit that appeared in local newspapers and internal publications to the legislator and press aide.**
- **Update the legislator continually on developments in your company.**
Take care to thoroughly inform him or her of how your facility is affected by the highway bill. Send annual reports and other company publications to allow the legislator to keep up to date with your company.
- **Stay in frequent touch.**
Take note of accomplishments, honors, or significant events in the legislator's career.
- **Continue to discuss issues of interest.**
Offer to meet with the legislator's staff and serve as a resource on industry issues. Follow up when your legislator visits the district again.