

Five Steps to Success: Making Your Hill Appointments

Setting appointments with the office of your legislators is the first and most important step you can make to fully participating in EdTA Theatre Education Capitol Hill Week. Making appointments is not as hard as you might think, but it may require patience and repeated efforts, especially as your meetings will be virtual. Here are five steps to help you succeed.

1. Read your Legislator Informational Sheets carefully.

Before you begin making your appointments, do a little homework about your legislators. The three informational sheets that you received—two for your Senators and one for your identified (based on your zip code) House Representative—include everything you need to know about these individuals. Each sheet includes:

- The legislator's full name, party affiliation, district (for House reps).
- The committees they serve on.
- The name, email, and phone number of the legislator's staff director, assistant or scheduler responsible for responding and setting constituent meeting appointments.

Take note if your:

- Senators are members of the House Education and Labor Committee (HELP).
- Representative belongs to the Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (L-HHS-Education Appropriations).
- Senators are members of the Cultural Caucus.
- Representative is a member of the Congressional Arts Caucus.

2. Choose your contact strategy.

You can make your appointment two ways:

- ✓ Emailing or calling the staff member listed on your Legislator Informational Sheet—that will be either the individual responsible for education; the legislative staff director; or a designated scheduler.
- ✓ Going to the legislator's website and filling out an online meeting request form.

Every legislator office handles things a bit differently, so you may find that one or another of these two strategies works best. If you leave a voice message and don't hear back from your designated contact, call back and ask for the scheduler. Most legislator's websites include a form in which you can make a request for a meeting, so if your phone or email strategy does not prove successful, try completing the form.

3. Prepare an email/phone script.

You know all about theatre, right? So, you know how to prepare a script. Write out your email or phone script in advance and be prepared to adapt it to who you are, our advocacy "asks" and who you are reaching out to. Here's a sample script you can start with.

“Hello, my name is _____. I am a member of the Educational Theatre Association/the International Thespian Society, the national voice of school theatre education. We represent 130,000 students and more than 5,000 educators throughout the country and abroad. My Chapter in _____ includes _____ adult members and _____ students. As the director/a member of Troupe _____ and a theatre educator, my colleagues and I/fellow Thespians are participating in Theatre in Our Schools Month in March.

We would like to share our concerns and interests regarding theatre education, including the need for more education funding in a COVID Relief Package, continuing support in the appropriations process for arts education, and support for the Reopen and Rebuild America’s Schools Act that will help us ensure that our buildings are safe spaces as we return to our classroom and stage.

Please let me and my fellow educators/Thespians know if you would like to meet on a virtual platform or over the phone. We look forward to hearing from you and learning how we may work together with the Representative/Senator on these issues.”

4. Try again.

Don’t be afraid to be persistent. If your first email effort or phone call doesn’t work, email the legislative director listed on the website. You may also look to see if there is a staffer listed as an education contact.

When you do hear back or make contact by phone, be ready to suggest at least two alternative days and times. Start with the week of March 22-26 but, again, be prepared to be flexible. Remember to begin by asking them how they would like to meet—by virtual platform or phone. Be mindful that, like everyone else, your legislators and their staff are striving to adapt to a different working environment. As such, there is no certainty that they will setting virtual versus phone meetings.

5. Share your Virtual Leave-Behind documents.

Once you have made contact, ask the staff member if you can share your virtual documents about EdTA, TIOS, and, most importantly, our 2022 appropriations requests and other arts and education priorities. In other words, our [EdTA Capitol Hill Week Virtual Leave Behind Packet](#).

Two final points

One, bear in mind that your legislators are very busy; if you do get to meet with them, great. But you may instead meet with one of their staff members. That meeting is just as valuable. It is the staff member’s job to communicate your concerns to their boss. Two, if you are not able to secure a meeting, ask if you can send the virtual packet; you are a constituent and have important facts and positions to communicate to your legislators.