

Center on Conscience & War

National Interreligious Service Board for Conscientious Objectors



MCOA: Getting a Lobbying Appointment ...

I. Plan Ahead—

Congressional staffers are usually very busy serving the needs of other constituents and analyzing issues. To successfully get an appointment for a desired date and time you will need to plan ahead.

Call the Congressional office at least two weeks in advance. This will give you an opportunity to confirm the appointment, and more importantly it takes a little stress off the Representative's scheduler. Also, when you plan ahead, it's more likely that you will meet with your Representative, and not one of their staff.

Be flexible with the dates you are available. Remember to take a look at the legislative calendar. Members of Congress and their Legislative Aides often work on holidays/breaks so this may be a perfect time to schedule an appointment. Pay attention to different hearings and event that are happening on Capitol Hill so you can judge if the Representative, or the Aide who handles military affairs will be out of the office.

II. Making Initial Contact—

When calling the general number for your Congressional office, make sure to keep the message brief. Get to the point. You are calling to find out the name and contact information for the scheduler. For example:

Hi, my name is _____ and I am a constituent of Representative _____ from _____, _____. I am looking to schedule an appointment to discuss the Military Conscientious Objector Act and was calling to see if you could you provide me with the name and contact information for the scheduler.

Keep the message simple. Make sure to get the correct spelling of the scheduler's name and contact information. Usually you will be required to either fax or e-mail your scheduling request. You should e-mail or fax the scheduler before speaking with them directly or leaving a voicemail. Keep the e-mail or fax brief and it is recommended that you e-mail or fax around 10:00AM (remember to be aware of time zones!). For example:

Hi (name of scheduler)—

My name is _____ and I am a constituent of Representative _____ from _____, _____. I will be traveling to Washington D.C. (or location of a district office) in support of the Military Conscientious Objector Act and the fundamental religious freedom of conscientious objection. I would like to schedule a meeting with Representative _____ on [date] at any time between the hours of [time]. My (wife, partner, friend...) will be also attending. Thank you and I look forward to speaking with you soon. You can reach me at (telephone number) or (e-mail).

You have now made initial contact! Remember—be clear and concise!

Center on Conscience & War, 1830 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington DC 20009

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"Stopping war one soldier at a time"

THIS DOCUMENT AND OTHERS ON THE MILITARY CO ACT CAN BE FOUND ON OUR WEBSITE

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III. Follow-Through—

Follow-through can be difficult. Sometimes you will immediately hear back from the scheduler, although sometimes they are requesting more information, which you should promptly provide. The day after your initial contact, you should call your Congressional office and ask to speak directly to the scheduler (use the scheduler's name) if you have yet to arrange a meeting time. Typically you will get their voicemail at which time it is appropriate to leave a message. Make sure to front-load your voicemail with pertinent information. For example:

Hi, my name is _____ and I am a constituent of Representative _____ from _____, _____. My number is _____ or you can reach me at my e-mail, _____. I recently sent you a request to arrange an appointment to discuss the Military Conscientious Objector Act with Representative _____. Thank you and I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Leave this, or a similar voicemail, every-other-day until you reach the scheduler. You can call a few times per day but be sure to only leave a voicemail every other day. This may seem excessive, but, you may be surprised when the scheduler thanks you for being so diligent in contacting them.

IV. Setting an Appointment Time—

Once making contact with the scheduler you can finalize the date and time of the meeting. If your Representative is not available to meet then you should ask to meet with the Legislative Aide who handles military affairs. He/she may ask you questions about the Military CO Act. An example of a response would be:

The MCOA seeks to make the military CO process fair and smooth as well as protect the religious freedom of all conscientious objectors. Four of the most important aspects of the legislation is that it would legally protect the ability to apply for a CO discharge, ensure that the religious freedom of all conscientious objection is protected, fix the discharge process, and allow for an independent review board to examine CO claims that are denied.

Make sure to get the name and contact information for the individual you will be meeting with. This is important. A few days before meeting with your Representative OR the Legislative Aide you should send them a copy of the DoD Instruction on conscientious objection, "A Call to Support Conscience: What is Conscientious Objection", and a brief e-mail. An example would be:

Hi, my name is _____ and I am from _____, _____. I am e-mailing you to verify our meeting on (date) at (time). I have attached a copy of the DoD Directive on conscientious objection as well as a document explaining conscientious objection. Also, if interested, more information on conscientious objection can be found at the website www.centeronconscience.org. I am looking forward to working together with you to protect the rights of military conscientious objectors!

Call and confirm your appointment the day before your scheduled meeting. You are now ready to meet with your Congressional office! If you have any further question please contact Andrew Gorby at andrew@centeronconscience.org.

Please read "MCOA: Preparing for Your Appointment..."

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