



# ADVOCACY TOOLKIT: MEETINGS THAT MATTER

SUMMER 2024





## YOUR ADVOCACY MATTERS

Thank you for being a restaurant advocate. By speaking directly with your elected officials, you help them understand how their action—or inaction—impacts your business.

Your engagement helps shape laws. **It is even more powerful when you can meet in-person with a Member of Congress (MOC) in your shared community.**

Meeting with a MOC in this setting, especially if it's in your restaurant, will make your business, your experience, and your employees a memorable reference point—**and have a lasting influence on how they think about future legislation that could impact the restaurant industry.**

This toolkit will help you strengthen your at-home advocacy by reviewing three kinds of in-person, in-district meetings you can have with your MOCs: a restaurant tour, a roundtable discussion, and a meeting in their district office.

**Get Social!**    

Take pictures of your meeting and share them on social media with the hashtag #ServingUpAction and tag @RestaurantsAct.

THANK YOU



## HERE TO HELP

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Your meetings will help advance the Association's mission and the Association is here to help by providing resources and answering questions.

**Your contact is Grant English, [genglish@restaurant.org](mailto:genglish@restaurant.org).**

By meeting, you will personalize the Association's policy priorities. Resources to learn more about these priority issues are available below.

- To learn more about the *Credit Card Competition Act*, visit [restaurant.org/SwipeFees](https://restaurant.org/SwipeFees)
- To learn more about protecting the tip credit visit, [restaurant.org/TipCredit](https://restaurant.org/TipCredit)
- To learn more about stopping a ban on restaurant fees and surcharges visit, [restaurant.org/FTCBan](https://restaurant.org/FTCBan)
- To learn more about pro-business tax provisions, visit [restaurant.org/TaxRelief](https://restaurant.org/TaxRelief)

### Who We Are

In your meetings, **it's important to localize the industry's economic impact.**

The restaurant industry has the nation's most diverse workforce and is America's second-largest private employer, employing over 15.5 million people nationwide.

The restaurant industry saw over \$1 trillion in sales in 2023. Behind that big number are small and independent businesses: 9 in 10 restaurants are small businesses with fewer than 50 employees and 7 in 10 restaurants are independently operated with just one unit.

**To see the restaurant industry's impact in your community, visit [restaurant.org/StateStats](https://restaurant.org/StateStats)**

# RECIPE FOR SUCCESS: MEETING BEST PRACTICES

## Securing the Meeting

- Send an invite.** Create and communicate an invite or meeting request to the Member of Congress (MOC) and/or their office. Be ready to provide a summary of what the meeting will entail.
- Work with staff.** To secure a meeting, you'll often work directly with the MOC's staff to schedule time, solidify logistics, etc. Treat staff like you would treat a MOC before, after, and during a meeting. Your goal is to build relationships at all levels.
- Be flexible and patient when scheduling.** MOCs often have busy and dynamic schedules. Meeting lengths will vary.

## Before the Meeting

- Know the issues.** Select and familiarize yourself with two priority issues and related "asks." You want to be well-prepared and have a consistent message.
- Plan ahead.** Script the meeting and assign roles. Ensure every attendee is familiar with the meeting schedule, the MOC, the policies to be discussed, and messaging.
- Seek Association resources.** The Association can provide guidance on issues and provide briefing materials and discussion questions.
- Research the lawmaker.** Understand the MOC's history on restaurant issues and their priorities. To have a productive conversation, try to find areas of common ground.
- Prepare to talk numbers.** Use numbers—the jobs you provide, how much you pay in swipe fees, etc.—to provide a real-world perspective on specific issues that impact your business.

## During the Meeting

- Stay on topic.** Your meeting may last no more than 20 or 30 minutes, so make the time count. Focus on two key issues. Limit small talk and introductions. Keep the meeting moving.
- Don't expect to agree on everything.** Keep the meeting pleasant and positive. If you can't find common ground on one issue, move on to another.
- Make the ask.** After you've laid out your points, make a specific ask, such as, "Will you cosponsor the *Credit Card Competition Act*?"
- No politics.** Keep personal politics out of the meeting. Avoid discussing campaigns, PACs, and financial support.

## After the Meeting

- Follow up.** If they ask for more information, follow up within a week.
- Say thanks.** Thank the MOC and their staff for their time. A thank you note is a nice touch.
- Report back.** Let the Association know how the meeting went and share any action items. Complete the survey linked [here](#).
- Go social.** Share photos from the meeting on social media. Tag and thank the MOC. Be sure to use the #ServingUpAction hashtag and tag @RestaurantsAct.

# RESTAURANT TOUR

## What is it?

A tour of your business is an opportunity to showcase your restaurant, your team, and your hospitality to a lawmaker. The approximately 30-minute meeting may also include a brief sit-down discussion.

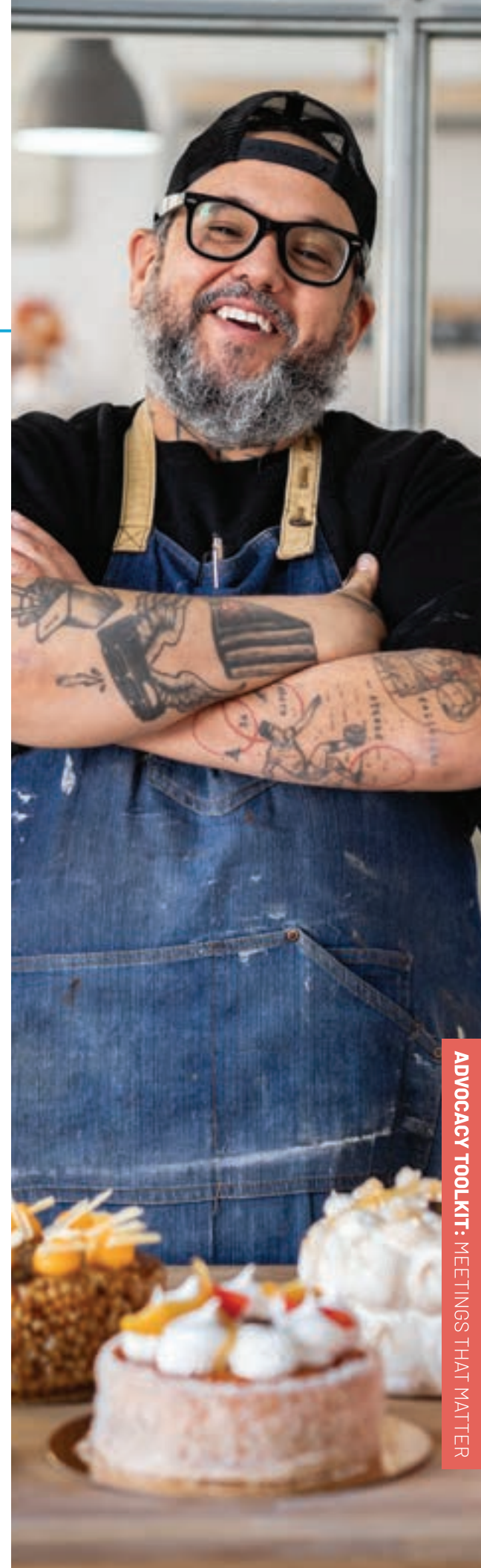
## Why does it work?

**Bringing a Member of Congress (MOC) into your restaurant is an opportunity to educate them about the reality of the restaurant business.** Additionally, this kind of meeting is unique, so what you say will have a lasting impact.

This setting will amplify your message. For example, if you're talking about tax changes that would help you invest in your business, stopping at a piece of equipment you'd like to invest in upgrading will underscore your message.

## How to do it?

- Plan the tour:** You will have limited time with your lawmaker. Decide what you want to show them and **select key stopping points on your tour that will bolster your message.**
- Notify:** Make sure your staff knows a special guest is coming and assign roles if applicable. For example, someone may be the designated picture taker.
- Prepare:** Know the issue(s) and the lawmaker.
- Day-of:** Arrive early. Be sure to take photos. Be respectful of the lawmaker's time.
- Follow-up:** Thank the MOC and their staff. Report back to the Association. Share any requested information with the lawmaker within a week.
- Go social:** Share photos from the meeting on social media. Be sure to use the #ServingUpAction hashtag and tag @RestaurantsAct.



## ROUNDTABLE

### What is it?

A restaurant roundtable is a meeting between a small group of local restaurant leaders and a legislator. This 30- to 60-minute conversation could be held in a restaurant or a Member of Congress's (MOC) district office.

### Why does it work?

Roundtables give a MOC a unique opportunity to learn about the restaurant industry in their district and **hear a range of operator perspectives on a specific issue**. A roundtable also provides a forum for operators and policymakers to discuss priority issues and get real-world perspectives in a conversational setting.

### How to do it?

- Connect:** If you're interested in hosting or organizing a roundtable, contact your State Restaurant Association (SRA) and the National Restaurant Association.
- Promote:** Work with your SRA to invite restaurant leaders and a lawmaker.
- Prepare:** Plan ahead. Script the meeting and assign roles. Ensure every attendee is familiar with the meeting schedule, the MOC, and messaging.
- Day-of:** Arrive early. Take photos and share them on social media. Respect the lawmaker's time.
- Follow-up:** Thank the MOC and their staff. Send a thank you note. Report back to the Association. Share any requested information within a week.
- Go social:** Share photos from the meeting on social media. Be sure to use the #ServingUpAction hashtag and tag @RestaurantsAct.





# DISTRICT OFFICE MEETING

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## What is it?

A meeting in a Member's district office is a 15-20 minute sit-down meeting to discuss select issues.

## Why does it work?

Meeting with a Member of Congress (MOC) in their district office is a **great opportunity to build your relationship with the MOC and get to know their senior district staff.**

Away from Capitol Hill and busy session days, you may find your MOCs and their staff have more bandwidth when meeting with you.

## How to do it?

- Prepare:** Know the issue(s) and the MOC. Script out what you want to say.
- Day-of:** Strive to get to know their district staff. Arrive early. Be respectful of the MOC's time.
- Follow-up:** Thank the MOC and their staff. Report back to the Association. Share any requested information within a week.
- Go social:** Share photos from the meeting on social media. Be sure to use the #ServingUpAction hashtag and tag @RestaurantsAct.





# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Thank you for your work on behalf of the restaurant industry.

Be sure to complete this survey after your meeting by clicking [here](#).

For more information on the Association's policy priorities, click [here](#).

For the latest Association advocacy, visit [restaurantsact.com](https://restaurantsact.com)

For state and district specific data you can share during your meeting, visit [restaurant.org/StateStats](https://restaurant.org/StateStats)

Please contact Grant English, [genglish@restaurant.org](mailto:genglish@restaurant.org) for assistance.



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