

# 2011

## Rights Working Group Legislative Visits Toolkit

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## 2011 CONGRESSIONAL RECESS VISITS

Thank you for advocating to stop racial profiling with your members of Congress (MOC). In 2011, we are looking to:

- assess MOC on their positions on anti-racial profiling legislation;
- highlight programs and policies that result in racial profiling;
- share stories from communities on the devastating impact of racial profiling; and
- make recommendations to Congress on how legislative efforts and congressional pressure on the Obama Administration can prohibit racial profiling and protect due process and other constitutional and human rights.

While you visit your congressional offices at home, we will work in DC to tell congressional representatives that we must prohibit racial profiling at all levels of government and eliminate any federal programs that allow this degrading practice to go unchecked. We look forward to strengthening and coordinating our efforts to stop racial profiling.

In addition to meeting with your representatives, you can **write an opinion editorial** for a community, ethnic or city paper. This will provide an opportunity to educate community members but also amplify the effect of your visit by demonstrating the importance of this issue in the community.

To support your efforts, there is a Resource Packet which includes ‘drop pieces’ (*policy documents to be left with congressional offices*) and background materials (*for your information only*).

### **Policy Recommendations/Asks for members of congress**

*During your visits with congressional offices, RWG suggests that you make the following recommendations to the congressional members and/or staff with whom you meet.*

1. Congress should pass the “End Racial Profiling Act,” establishing a federal ban on profiling based on race, religion, ethnicity and national origin at the federal, state and local level.
2. Congress should work with the Obama Administration to eliminate Department of Homeland Security programs that result in racial profiling—such as the 287(g) Program, the Secure Communities Initiative and the Criminal Alien Program.
  - *Congress can legislatively repeal section 287(g) of the Immigration and Nationality Act.*
  - *Congress can legislatively eliminate or restrict funding for the Secure Communities Initiative, the Criminal Alien Program and other programs that utilize state and local law enforcement agencies to conduct civil immigration enforcement.*
  - *Congress can legislatively require the Department of Homeland Security to collect data on state and local law enforcement agencies participating in 287(g), Secure Communities, and the Criminal Alien Program to determine the extent of racial profiling in these jurisdictions.*
- a. Congress should pressure the Obama Administration to ensure that the Department of Justice’s 2003 Guidance Regarding the Use of Race by Federal Law Enforcement Agencies is strengthened to cover profiling based on religion and national origin, to close the loopholes that allow for profiling at the border and in the name of national security, to cover surveillance, to

apply anywhere federal agents act in partnership with state and local law enforcement agents and to any agencies that receive federal funds, and to be enforceable.

### **Drop pieces to leave behind with congressional offices**

*See Resource Packet or visit*

*[www.rightsworkinggroup.org/content/2011-rwg-legislative-visits-toolkit](http://www.rightsworkinggroup.org/content/2011-rwg-legislative-visits-toolkit)*

#### **Recommended Drop Pieces**

- **issue brief** entitled “Unjust, Ineffective and Counterproductive” that highlights RWG’s main policy recommendations for our “Racial Profiling: Face the Truth” campaign
- **issue brief** on the End Racial Profiling Act
- **bill summary** of the End Racial Profiling Act
- **issue brief** on immigration enforcement by state and local law enforcement agencies that resulted in racial profiling
- **issue brief** on 2003 Department of Justice Guidance on Racial Profiling

#### **Optional Drop Pieces**

- **fact sheet** by the National Immigration Law Center on Department of Homeland Security (DHS) immigration enforcement programs that rely on state and local criminal justice systems: <http://www.nilc.org/immlawpolicy/LocalLaw/ice-access-2009-11-05.pdf>

### **Background materials for your information only**

*Do **NOT** leave these behind with congressional offices*

*See Resource Packet or visit*

*[www.rightsworkinggroup.org/content/2011-rwg-legislative-visits-toolkit](http://www.rightsworkinggroup.org/content/2011-rwg-legislative-visits-toolkit)*

- **talking points** on racial profiling
- answers to **frequently asked questions** about racial profiling
- explanation of what’s different in ERPA of 2011 from ERPA of 2010
- congressional committee **analysis**
- **media guide** with sample op-ed

***If your congressional member is already supportive of the aforementioned policy asks, you can ask her/him to become a champion on these issues by doing more.***

- A member of Congress can make a 1-minute speech, drawing the attention of other members and the public to one or more of the policy asks detailed above.
- A member of Congress can reach out to her/his colleagues in Congress and lobby them to become more supportive of the asks detailed above.
- A member of Congress can take the lead on drafting a letter to the Obama Administration urging action on the administrative asks detailed above.
- A member of Congress can sponsor a congressional hearing on the specific issues detailed above if that member is part of the majority party.

## HOW TO SET UP MEETINGS WITH THE OFFICES OF YOUR CONGRESSIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

Meeting in person with the office of your congressional representative is one of the most effective ways to influence your lawmakers. We recommend that you call or fax the district office of your congressional representative and request a meeting on the specific issue you wish to discuss with his or her office. You will likely be directed to a staff person who works for your congressional representative on the specific legislative, regulatory and policy issues you wish to discuss. The staff members of elected representatives have great influence on the positions and votes of their bosses. However, you should still feel comfortable in making a request to see your congressional representative.

### Arranging a Meeting

To arrange a meeting:

1. If you have not determined whom to target, visit [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) and [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) to find your MOC. When referring to a MOC, you should refer to him or her as Congressman XX or Congresswomen YY. If you need support determining whom to meet with please email Sameera Hafiz at [shafiz@rightsworkinggroup.org](mailto:shafiz@rightsworkinggroup.org).
2. Call or email the office of the MOC with your request for a meeting. Some congressional offices have special forms or procedures for meeting requests. This information is usually available on the MOC's website.
3. Once connected with MOC's office, ask to speak with the staff member who works on racial profiling or civil rights issues. If you wish to meet with your legislator rather than a staffer, you will likely need to make a request, in writing, to the congressional representative's scheduler. Your written request should include details similar to those that appear in the talking points we've suggested below (#4). We've also provided a sample written request for a meeting which you may send by email. You can ask the congressional office for the scheduler's contact details.
4. Once connected with the relevant staff member, we recommend these talking points:

*"I am a constituent from [city or town in your state/district]. I am calling to request a meeting with the [Senator or Congressman / Congresswoman] to discuss issues and legislation related to racial profiling while [she/he] is in [state/district] during the congressional recess this August. I represent [name of your organization], a group dedicated to [include a brief note on the work of your organization]. I will be attending the meeting with [detail the number of individuals who will accompany you] from [name their state or district and an organizational affiliation, if relevant]."*

We are working in partnership with Rights Working Group to raise awareness and support for legislative issues connected to the issue of racial profiling. Rights Working Group is a national coalition of immigrant rights, human rights, civil liberties and national security organizations formed in the aftermath of September 11<sup>th</sup> to guarantee human rights protections for all people in the United States."

**Important Note:** When you speak to the office, it is very important that you are specific about the exact issues you would like to discuss so that you are connected with the appropriate staffer.

## Sample Written Request for a Meeting

*[Your Address]*

*[Your Representative's/Senator's Address]*

*[Date]*

Dear Mr./Ms. *[Name of Appointment Secretary/Scheduler]*:

I am *[title and name of your congressional representative]*'s constituent and live in *[city or town in your state/district]*. I represent *[name of your organization]*, a group dedicated to *[include a brief note on the work of your organization]*.

I am deeply concerned about the practice of racial profiling by law enforcement in my community. *[You may wish to note in a sentence or two the specific type, scope and impact of racial profiling as it exists in your community here]*.

I would like to meet in the district office in *[city or town in your state/district]* with *[name of Senator or Representative]* while she/he will be in the *[state or district]* during the congressional recess this August to discuss issues and legislation related to racial profiling. I will be accompanied by *[detail the number of individuals who will accompany you] from [name their state or district and an organizational affiliation, if relevant]*. We are working in partnership with the Rights Working Group to raise awareness and support for legislation related to racial profiling. Rights Working Group is a national coalition of immigrant rights, human rights, civil liberties and national security organizations that formed in the aftermath of September 11<sup>th</sup> committed to human rights protections for all people in the United States.

Please contact me if it will be possible to meet with the *[Senator or Representative]* or an appropriate staff person this August. Thank you for considering this request. I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,

*[Your Name]*

*[Your Telephone]*

*[Your Email]*

## PREPARING FOR YOUR MEETING

### Who Should Attend the Meeting?

Determine who you'd like to have participate in a meeting with your Senator or Representative. Although you can attend a meeting alone, we recommend that you go with 2-5 individuals so that the congressional office can hear a range of related perspectives and interests.

If you are working with a coalition to stop racial profiling, we strongly encourage you to invite your coalition partners. The more people you represent the stronger your position. Some meetings are a great opportunity to develop leaders in your community. Meetings provide more than information; they give your leaders an opportunity to learn about the advocacy process and interact with your congressional members.

Once you've identified who will attend the meeting, break down tasks for research and coordinate a preparatory meeting before you attend a meeting at the congressional office.

### Research Your Member of Congress

- Visit your congressional member's website and read his or her basic biographical information and research his or her voting record. Members' official websites can be found at [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) or [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov). You may also want to visit [www.votesmart.org](http://www.votesmart.org) and [www.opencongress.org](http://www.opencongress.org) for more details on members' voting records and positions on issues.
- You can also start by doing a basic Google search. Analyze your legislator's positions on racial profiling.
- Talk to your family, friends and colleagues and ask them what they know about the member with whom you're interested in meeting.

### Brush Up on the Issues

- Rights Working Group has provided issue briefs and fact sheets in your resource packet.
- Determine the form and impact of racial profiling in your community. You may want to gather stories, news reports, and studies by credible sources on the impact of racial profiling in your community. Personal stories can be powerful advocacy tools that engage legislators and their staff and relate legislative decisions to their human impact. In doing your research, note whether your legislators may be more swayed by stories affecting certain populations.
  - Determine if 287(g) or Secure Communities is in operation in your community and if your member of Congress has acknowledged the presence of these programs or has gone on record for or against them. Updated lists of jurisdictions appear at the links below:
    - 287(g) Jurisdictions: <http://www.ice.gov/287g/>
    - Secure Communities Jurisdictions: [http://www.ice.gov/secure\\_communities/](http://www.ice.gov/secure_communities/)

## HOW TO LOBBY

*\* Please note that even if you are unable to schedule a meeting with a particular congressional office, you can still plan a drop-by visit. Some congressional district offices have specific times for drop-by visits while congressional members are in state/district. You can find out about these specific hours by calling the congressional district office. If it is not possible to meet your congressional member or an appropriate staff member at that time, you can leave a packet of information about your organization and background materials on your issues with the staff member who greets you.*

## BEFORE THE MEETING

If you are attending the meeting with a group, make sure you have a preparatory meeting.

If you are visiting as part of a group, be sure to identify:

- One member of your group to lead or facilitate the meeting.
- The individual or group will speak on the different issues and who will share case studies or personal stories. We recommend sharing personal stories, news reports, and credible research studies in the meeting. Stories and concrete findings from credible research studies are powerful advocacy tools.
- A note taker to capture what the MOC or staffer says in response to your asks and note any follow up.

Being prepared for your visit is critical to having an effective meeting.

- **Prepare** individual remarks. Keep your statements brief. If sharing personal stories, focus on essential details and try to keep them under 3 minutes. Remember, sharing personal stories of affected individuals (clients, family members or friends) can be very powerful.
- **Rehearse.** Practice what you will say at the meeting. This will help you ensure that you raise all the key points and that you sound natural and not as though you're reading from a script.
- **Prepare your materials.** It is generally a good idea to bring background materials on your issues to give to the staff member. Bring the following items to your meeting: (1) the agenda you have developed with your group, (2) the issue briefs and other drop pieces on racial profiling that RWG provides and (3) any relevant materials developed by your organization and others that you want to share.
- **Dress appropriately.** When possible, business attire or business casual is generally recommended for any visits you make to congressional offices. However, you should dress in what is most comfortable for you.

## AT THE MEETING

### Suggested Meeting Agendas for Congressional Visits

Your meeting's agenda and structure will depend on the amount of time you are able to schedule to meet with your legislator's office. Please modify these agendas for your group as appropriate:

### 30 Minute Meeting

1. Brief introduction of the members attending meeting and the organizations represented (5 minutes).
2. Brief introduction of the issue and your asks. This is a time to share personal stories from your district or state. We also suggest that you use RWG's talking points and policy asks as a guide (10 minutes).
3. Present your request or recommendation. Again, we suggest that you use RWG's talking points (3 minutes).
4. Questions and answers. Allow time for some back and forth between your delegation and the staff member (10 minutes).
5. Say thank you and make a follow-up plan with the legislator or staff member (2 minutes).

### 15 Minute Meeting

1. Brief introduction of the members of your delegation and the organizations represented (2 minutes).
2. Brief introduction of the issue and your asks. This is a time to share personal stories from your district or state. We also suggest that you use RWG's talking points and policy asks as a guide (8 minutes).
3. Present your request or recommendation. Again, we suggest that you use RWG's talking points (3 minutes).
4. Say thank you and make a follow-up plan with the legislator or staff member (2 minutes).

### Tips on Introductions

- Remember your meeting is not long so do not spend too much time on introductions alone.
- Let the facilitator lead so they can move the meeting along.
- Have each individual introduce themselves with the organization they are associated with.
- Describe your organization **briefly** including the number of member you represent. Also let them know that you are working in partnership with Rights Working Group (RWG) and organizations around the country to raise awareness and support for legislative issues related to racial profiling.

“RWG is a national coalition of immigrant rights, human rights, civil liberties and national security organizations that formed after September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 and committed to guaranteeing human rights protections for all people in the United States.”

- Remind your congressional representative or staff member that you are a constituent.

### Additional Tips

Share only what you know. It is crucial that you establish yourself as a credible source. **If you don't know something, don't be afraid to say so.** You can tell the staff member that you will find out the answer and get back to them. *Rights Working Group staff can help you find these answers; contact us for help.*

Keep it short. Congressional offices are exceedingly busy and they will greatly appreciate your ability to get to the point. Your request may be interrupted so **remember to get to your “asks” in within the first few minutes of your conversation.**

Be polite even if you disagree. A simple, warm greeting will be welcomed but an abrasive manner will likely be counterproductive and harm your working relationship with the office.

Be constructive but firm. Avoid criticism but be firm in your positions. If you disagree with a position the congressional office is taking, make your point and move on. In the event that you meet with a MOC’s staff person, rather than the MOC, you should not be disappointed. Meetings with staffers are equally as important, as MOCs rely on their staffers for information. Sometimes meetings can occur anywhere, in lobbies or hallways. Do not take this personally, as it happens quite commonly.

### **Remember**

- **Explain the issue.** Present the facts in an orderly and straight-forward fashion. Avoid jargon and acronyms. Don’t presume that the legislator or the staff member has any prior knowledge of the subject. You can ask the legislator or staff member what he/she knows about the subject and then tailor your remarks accordingly.
- **Relay the impact** of the programs and policies as they directly affect your community. Discuss personal examples and relevant news stories and research studies. Consult RWG’s issue briefs on racial profiling for more information.
- **Make your specific ‘asks’** or recommendations. We suggest that you begin with the legislative recommendations RWG has outlined.
- **Establish a plan for follow-up.** Get the name and contact details of any staff member with whom you spoke and discuss with the legislator or staff member what your next steps for engagement with that office might be and a timeline, if any.
- **Don’t forget to leave your packet** of materials and contact information with the congressional office.
- **Thank** the congressional representative or staffer for their time.

### **AFTER THE MEETING**

Your reports are invaluable to us; please inform RWG staff on how your meeting went by filling in a post-meeting report form in your Resource Packet.

Formally thank the office with a letter or email and follow-up with the information or materials you promised the office. Commend the office publicly if appropriate—in letters to the editor, for example.

Seek creative ways to maintain your relationship with the congressional office—send them relevant news articles or follow-up with phone calls before relevant votes, for example.

**THANK YOU!**