



Precision Machined Products Association Government Affairs

How To Guide #1: Organizing a Congressional Plant Visit

Those of you who have traveled to Washington, D.C. to meet with your congressmen and senators realize how effective these types of face-to-face meetings are. Regardless of the length of your visit, if you prepared properly you had a great opportunity to provide your elected officials with information and knowledge they didn't have before the meeting.

Scheduling an appointment with your congressman or Senator in his or her Washington office, climbing on a airplane and staying at an over-priced D.C. hotel is one way to get face time with your elected officials.

There are other, less costly, less time consuming and, according to all the experts, more effective ways of getting your message across. One of the best is to invite your congressman or senator to visit your plant, tour your operations and speak to your employees.

Congressional plant visits, typically held during a congressional recess, give you an opportunity to present your problems and solutions to elected officials in your environment, where you feel most comfortable. Elected officials enjoy participating in plant tours because they can learn more about their constituents' business, and especially appreciate the opportunity to speak directly to employees.

The following **Checklist for *Organizing a Congressional Plant Visit*** is taken from the National Association of Manufacturers' *Building Relationships: A Guide to Successful Plant Tours for Elected Officials and Their Staff*. The complete publication is available in Adobe format (134 kb) on the NAM web site at:

http://www.nam.org/Docs/ManufacturingInstitute/27243_030920PlantTourGuide.pdf

CHECKLIST FOR ORGANIZING A CONGRESSIONAL PLANT VISIT

SETTING UP THE PLANT TOUR

Preplanning – Schedule tours during congressional recess, when legislators are more likely to be in their home state and District; House and Senate schedules can be found at <http://www.house.gov/> and <http://www.senate.gov/>

Invitations – Work through the legislator's *Scheduler*, and be flexible with your dates. If your tour takes place during an election campaign, offer "equal time" to challengers on different days. *See Appendix for sample letter of invitation.*

Announcing the Event – Do you want this to be a public event? Send press releases to local media outlets *See Appendix for sample press release.* Post notices to employees advising them of the tour and providing background on the guest. Use your company newsletter, if you have one, to promote the event.

ORGANIZING THE PLANT TOUR

Planning Committee – Set up a small committee to plan and participate in the event; include the President/CEO, Human Resources Manager, Safety Manager, others as appropriate.

Do Your Homework – Research your guest's biographical, political, business, social, educational, legislative background, and voting record; use the PMPA online *Legislative Action Center* at <http://capwiz.com/pmpa/home/> to do this research.

Plant Preparation – Make sure your plant is ready for company; clear aisles, make sure hazardous areas are well marked, prepare a map of the tour and put up signs marking the route, prepare a welcome sign for the front entrance, provide name badges for all key participants, make sure everyone has and will be wearing proper safety equipment, set a specific time for the plant tour, determine whether there will be a meal or refreshments, tour guides should rehearse the tour route. Consider posting the purchase price on each piece of equipment to demonstrate the financial investment you have in your business. One member posted a sign on a machine which said: "*This machine will soon be idle because our government won't help me compete.*"

Message Preparation – Prepare a *Company Information Sheet* which provides a brief history of the company, explains what you produce and for whom, and lists your legislative and regulatory priorities. Include your contact information, and have plenty of copies available for the legislator's staff and the media. See the Appendix for a sample *Company Information Sheet*.

Transportation – Legislators will most likely arrange their own transportation to your plant, although you may be called upon to pick your guest up at a local airport, and then deliver him/her to their next stop. Plan on meeting at a designated location to eliminate confusion.

Displays/Literature – Proudly display parts and other products for your guest to see. A packet of promotional material, company literature, your *Company One-Pager*, and a company memento (if you have them) for your guests will enhance the visit.

DURING THE TOUR

Show Machinery in Operation – Show your capabilities by demonstrating how your machinery works, explain the end use of the parts you make. It goes without saying that your guest must be provided with all appropriate personal protection equipment

Point out challenges – Relate what your guest is seeing to specific problems you have (‘I worry about my customer taking that part to China.’ ‘This operation could run more productively and just as safely if I didn’t have this OSHA regulation to deal with.’)

Allow Your Guest to Meet Employees – Introduce the legislator to employees you encounter during the tour. If the visit takes place during a lunch break, offer an opportunity to address employees while they eat lunch. Encourage questions from employees.

Provide Opportunities for Photos – Have the legislator “do something” physical, such as shaking hands with employees, run a machine, examine parts, look at a display on a computer screen. Take photos if there is no media present or if the legislator’s staff doesn’t have the equipment; offer to send copies to your guest.

Stay on Message – You have an important story to tell and you want to relay all important points by the end of the visit. Keep the conversation flowing with information about the jobs you create and the benefits you provide, your views on important issues of the day, specific government assistance which would help you compete, regulations which hinder your ability to compete, etc. Your guest won’t necessarily agree with all your opinions, but he or she will be gracious and will listen.

Hold a Closing Conference – Privately thank your guest for taking the time to visit. Ask for a commitment in support of, or opposition to, specific legislation if appropriate. Remind him or her of any information they promised to provide to you, and acknowledge any information you promised to send to them. Ask for the name, phone number and e-mail address of the staff person in Washington that you can follow-up with in the future. Extend an invitation to repeat the visit in the future.

AFTER THE TOUR

Follow-Up Correspondence – Write a thank-you note reminding your guest of your key points and important issues. Write a separate thank you for local or D.C. staff who were instrumental in organizing the visit. Send copies of any photos taken. Provide any follow-up information request during the visit. Send copies of your company newsletter with stories and pictures covering the visit. Invite the legislator and his or her local staff to upcoming company functions.

Thank Your Own – Be sure to recognize and thank employees who helped make the tour a success.

Evaluation – Ask everyone involved in the congressional visit to evaluate the event. Share your experience with other PMPA members using the Association’s Corporate Issues E-Mail Listserve. Contact PMPA’s Government Affairs Department if particular problems or opportunities surfaced during the visit.

**PRECISION MACHINED
PRODUCTS ASSOCIATION**

APPENDIX

Sample Invitation Letter – On your company letterhead

(Date)

Via Fax

To Fax Number: *[legislator's office fax number, either local or in Washington, D.C.]*

The Honorable _____

United States Senate *[or House of Representatives]*

[Address – consult PMPA Legislative Action Center at <http://capwiz.com/pmpa/home/>]

Dear Representative *[or Senator]* _____:

I am writing to invite you to participate in a plant tour here at *[company name]*. The Precision Machined Products Association – the trade group which represents the interests of my business – encourages every member of Congress to visit the plants of their local manufacturers to learn more about our manufacturing capabilities, to gain a better understanding of the competitive challenges we face and to meet and speak with our workers.

[Insert information describing your company in 2 – 3 sentences; include the number of employees]

I hope you will accept this invitation to visit our plant and speak with our employees. I suggest the following format for your visit: brief welcoming chat with *[insert names of 2 – 3 key company principles]*, tour of the plant, *[optional refreshments]*, and open discussion with our employees. The entire event shouldn't take more than 90 minutes. If possible, we would like to schedule your visit to coincide with our lunch break which is from _____ to _____; this would allow you to speak to and with a majority of our workers in the lunchroom.

Let me suggest the following dates, although we are flexible and will gladly work with your schedule: *[insert suggested days of the week, months, date, and suggested time frame]*.

We sincerely hope you will accept our invitation. I will call your office to follow up on this invitation and to work out details of the event. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

[Your name and title]

APPENDIX

Sample Press Release – On your letterhead.

NEWS ALERT

Contact: [Your name]
[Phone Number]
[E-Mail Address]

[NAME OF COMPANY] TO HOST PLANT TOUR BY [NAME OF GUEST] [DATE]

What: [Name of company, city, state] will host [name of legislator] for a plant tour on [date and time] as part of an effort to make lawmakers more aware of the benefits manufacturers bring to communities and the unprecedented challenges now facing America's basic manufacturing sector.

[Name of legislator] will tour the facility's production areas and observe [insert brief description of what the legislator will see while on the plant tour]. [Name of legislator] will also speak to a gathering of employees and respond to questions.

[Insert brief description of company].

[If applicable] [Name of company] is a member of the Precision Machined Products Association, Brecksville, OH, the premier provider of association services in advancing the global competitiveness of the precision machining industry.

Who: [Title and name and of legislator, complete with District number if House member]

Where: [Company name]
[Plant address]
[City, State, Zip]

When: [Date and time of plant visit]

[Insert company address and web site, if not shown elsewhere]

APPENDIX

Sample Company Information Sheet – On your letterhead; keep to one page.

[**COMPANY NAME**]

Address & Contact

[*Primary contact name and title*]

[*Primary address; do not use P.O. Box*]

[*Phone number*]

[*Fax number*]

[*Web site*]

[*E-mail address for primary contact*]

Company History and Products

[*Provide brief history of the company, types of industries served, and specific types of products manufactured, e.g. ‘parts for anti-lock brake systems,’ ‘parts for Hawk surface-to-air missiles.’ Relate the work you do to everyday life.*]

Important Issues

[*Include local, state and national issues that are important to your business. Sources for information include the PMPA’s Manufacturing Under Siege Talking Points http://www.pmpa.org/resource/public/talking_points.pdf, the National Association of Manufacturers <http://www.nam.org/>, and your local and/or state manufacturing associations. Present your issues as bullet-points; be brief, but clear on your position. If known, reference specific legislation you support or oppose. Relate your positions to your company’s competitive position and your ability to create jobs. This document should be dated and updated frequently.*]

Date: [*Current date*]