

How to Organize a Congressional Briefing

Congressional briefings can be a good way to communicate information to policy-makers. Briefings are a little bit like a mini-lecture on a specific topic: you can have one, two, or three experts presenting information in a style understandable to a layman audience. It helps to have handouts and/or PowerPoint presentations in addition to the talk so that attendees have some written information to take with them. While it's unusual to get the Senators and Representatives themselves to attend briefings, Hill staffers will regularly be sent in their stead as a way for Members to stay informed on issues of the day.

Briefings for 75 congressional staff can range from \$2,000-\$3,000 in cost, depending on whether it's a buffet or sit-down venue. **The organizations sponsoring - and/or co-sponsoring - briefings are responsible organizing their briefing and for all expenses associated with the briefing.** The guidelines below were prepared to assist you in organizing your briefing.

1-2 MONTHS PRIOR TO BRIEFING (if possible)

- **Congressional sponsor.** Only briefing applications approved by the Planning Committee will be sponsored by the Congressional R&D Caucus.
- **Room:** Reserve a room on Capitol Hill for your briefing.
- **Confirm speakers either by email or phone.**
 - Send all speaker bios to info@researchcaucus.org so they can be linked to the website at www.researchcaucus.org
 - Provide a brief explanation of what to expect, including mention of congressional staff's limited familiarity with research in general, research methods, and statistical techniques.
 - Time limits for their talk. Briefings are usually scheduled from 12:00pm (noon) - 1:30pm. The amount of time each speaker would have will be dependent on the number of speakers in each panel presentation.
 - Request for information regarding handouts, special A/V or other equipment needs.
 - Encourage speakers to prepare PowerPoint presentations. Once the speaker sends you their PowerPoint Presentation, you can make handouts of their slides.
 - Request that they include contact information, including websites, on their materials.
- **Advertising.** The R&D Caucus Advisory Committee will announce your briefing on www.researchcaucus.org.

Although this isn't required, you can email Washington publications about the event. Try to get your event listed about two weeks prior to the actual date of event. Send a one-sentence description of the event, along with date, time, location, and contact person.

2-4 WEEKS PRIOR TO BRIEFING

- **Arrange for AV/Equipment/Room Set-Up Needs:** (Microphone, podium, screen, registration table, buffet table, extension cords, etc.) See list of phone numbers below.
- **Arrange for caterers.** It's cheapest and easiest to use the House and Senate caterers. They will need a final head count approximately 48 hours before the briefing. See list of phone numbers below
- **Invitation Flyer:** Prepare an invitation flyer and email to info@researchcaucus.org for review/approval. Fax your invitational flyer to all congressional offices (this is a congressional rule). A sample flyer is attached.
- **"Dear Colleague" letter:** Based on your flyer, the R&D Caucus Co-Chairs will draft a "Dear Colleague" inviting Caucus members to attend your event/briefing.

2 WEEKS PRIOR TO BRIEFING

- **Make further contact with key congressional staff.** Although you will have already sent faxes to congressional offices, it's a good idea to send your invite directly to relevant congressional committees, either via fax or email.
- **Keep track of RSVPs as they come in.** This list will be used to make nametags for attendees.

WEEK PRIOR TO BRIEFING

- Have speakers send you their PowerPoint presentations so you can load them onto your laptop and print out handouts. You will have to bring your own laptop/projector to the briefing.
- Make name tent cards for speakers.
- Confirm room, equipment and food.

PREPARE PACKETS OR HAND-OUTS

- Make copies of presented materials (i.e., overheads, PowerPoint slides).
- Put contact information in folder
- Make sure you thank the congressional sponsor somewhere in the materials you're handing out.
- Include flyer, speaker list, and information about your organization and the R&D Caucus Advisory Committee.

DAY BEFORE BRIEFING

- Create nametags for attendees and speakers.
- Blank nametags for walk-ins
- Create sign-in sheets for advance registration.
- Create blank sign-in sheet for walk-ins
- Brochure/Program Info to display on sign-in tables
- Pens, magic markers, tape, extension cords, PowerPoint projector (if needed), other supplies

DAY OF BRIEFING

- Speakers should arrive 15 minutes before they are scheduled to speak so they can eat before speaking. Tell the speakers more about their audience:

- Some congressional staff may have little understanding of science or research.
- Audience members may come and go during the presentation.
- Warn the speakers that they need to adhere to their time.
- The sponsor will provide brief opening remarks, thank co-sponsors and the R&D
- Caucus for sponsoring the event, and introduce the Co-chairs of the Caucus.
- Keep someone manning the sign-in table until the briefing is 30 minutes underway - often people come in late, and it's a good idea to keep a staff representative there to help late-arriving attendees.
- Make arrangements for the room to be cleaned. Leave the room in good condition.

AFTER BRIEFING

- Write the R&D Caucus co-chairs a thank-you note
- Send follow up emails to speakers, if necessary, to obtain PowerPoint presentations to post on our website and then email attendees and those who RSVP'd but couldn't attend to let them know they can review the materials at <http://www.researchcaucus.org/>
- Send thank-you notes to each of the presenters.

Important Phone Numbers

Food

Capitol Host: 202-226-2459

Room set-up (podiums, screens, microphones, etc.)

CAO: 202-225-3374

