Create a plan.

- Gather your meeting team and decide on each member’s role. Establish which legislation you want to address and who will speak on its behalf. Many meetings are quite short, so be sure to prepare a 2-minute “elevator pitch” with your most important talking points and your direct ask for support.

- Do your homework! Review your assigned legislation and use the materials provided online to help you prepare; also consider doing your own deep-dive research on your assigned legislation (i.e., how Title IV-A funds have helped expand theatre education access in your district or another district in the state).

- Remember: You are speaking to federal legislators, not state lawmakers. While you can certainly address state issues with your Senators and Representatives, they are not empowered to vote on state-related appropriations or legislation, though they certainly are not without influence.

- Prepare your own story—everyone has a personal experience that explains why they are passionate about theatre education. Whether you get to tell yours or not, be ready to share it if the opportunity presents itself during the meeting.

Arrive on time and be patient.

- The halls of Congress can be confusing. Be mindful that you will have to go through security, climb some stairs or take an elevator, then navigate a long hallway to find your way to the legislator’s office, so leave plenty of time to ensure an on-time arrival.

- Approach the front desk and announce your arrival and whom you represent. The waiting areas in most Congressional offices are quite small and often full of other advocates waiting for their own meeting. Don’t be surprised if you are asked to wait in the hallway.

Do introductions.

- Have everyone in the group introduce themselves very briefly. You should say your name, your organization and role, and where you live and work so that the member of Congress and/or staff knows you are a constituent (i.e., Laura Smith, theatre educator, South High School, Indianapolis, representing Indiana Thespians and the Educational Theatre Association.)

Explain your organization and your association with it.

- One pre-assigned member should explain the mission and goals of EdTA, the chapter and, if appropriate, their school’s association with Thespians. If time allows, other delegates can speak of their own role as educators, students, or community supporters.

Introduce the purpose of the meeting.

- Be succinct and straightforward in expressing what you are requesting and why. (“We are here to ask your support for 2024 federal appropriations and legislation that can impact equitable access to K-12 theatre education for our students.”)

Make your points in support of your ask.

- Stay on topic and present your messages using the Theatre Education Theatre Student Fact Sheet and the EdTA FY2024 Federal Support Request sheet included in your Leave Behind folder to support your case.

- Personalize your presentation with personal stories from delegates that detail how theatre education has impacted their lives, someone they know, or their community.

- Use facts and figures cited in the Advocacy Day Prep Work materials that address the individual legislative asks (i.e. National Endowment for the Arts).

- Emphasize how individual funding and/or legislation could impact theatre education in your state, district, or school.
Make a clear ask.

- Be very specific about what you want your legislator to do, for example: “Can you commit to funding $20.5 billion for Title I Part A for FY24?”
- If you’ve done research on why federal funds or legislation is needed to support theatre and other arts education in your state or district, present the data to support your ask.
- Present your leave-behind folder and point out what it includes, along with any state/district/school related materials you added. Offer to send links or additional documents via email, if the legislator or staff member requests to know more about something you discussed.
- If time allows, ask whether the legislator is a member of the Senate Cultural Caucus or Congressional Arts Caucus. If not, offer to send the link (included in the Five Steps to Setting a Legislator Appointment guide).

Thank your legislator or staff.

- Follow up with an email thank-you and answer any questions asked or include the requested information.

Take pictures!

- Pictures of your visits to Congressional offices tell a great story—for yourself, your chapter, and EdTA! Ask if you could take an individual or group picture with the legislator and share it on your social media page. Generally, they are amenable to photos with constituents, particularly students.