

Virtual Hill Advocacy Day “What If” Hypotheticals

<p>What if I cannot make it to a meeting at the last minute?</p>	<p>Contact your Team Leader for the meeting to let them know. Their information will be in your schedule. If for some reason you do not have their contact information, contact your PTA President or Federal Legislative Chair for your state.</p>
<p>What if I cannot find a quiet spot to join the meeting?</p>	<p>Please do everything in your power to find a quiet spot free of distractions ahead of time. That said, we understand things happen. If your environment is noisy, make sure your audio is on mute. If you're a speaker, you should also let your Team Leader know so they can find someone else to speak during your part of the meeting.</p>
<p>What if I have technical difficulties joining the meeting?</p>	<p>We strongly encourage you to attend the Hill Day Practice Session on March 9th where all Hill Day attendees will have an opportunity to test out the video conferencing system on their device. On Virtual Hill Day, if you encounter technical difficulties within five minutes of (or during) one of your meetings, please use the conference number listed on your schedule to call into the meeting. If you have trouble more than five minutes before the meeting, call the Soapbox Help Desk for their assistance: 202-362-5910.</p>
<p>What if my Member of Congress or their staffer is late to a meeting?</p>	<p>Members and their staff have packed schedules and are sometimes running late despite best intentions. That said, we only have about 15-30 minutes for each meeting. If someone is more than a few minutes late, please call the Soapbox Help Desk for their assistance: 202-362-5910.</p>
<p>What if I don't want to speak during a meeting? What if I do want to speak?</p>	<p>We strongly encourage you to attend the Hill Day Practice Session on March 9th where all Hill Day attendees will have an opportunity to meet with their teams and decide who will have speaking roles. When you meet with your team, you should share if you're comfortable with speaking or leading the meeting. Every person does not need to speak during a Hill meeting.</p>
<p>What if I don't know the answer to a question asked by my Member of Congress or their staffer?</p>	<p>Don't worry about it! Whatever you do, <i>do not make up an answer</i>. It will be much harder to retract an incorrect statement than to simply answer their question in a follow up email. Instead, be honest - tell them you aren't 100% sure and you will need to get back to them with the answer. Staffers and Members of Congress are very used to hearing this type of response, and it</p>

	<p>does not reflect poorly on PTA to show that you want to be sure before providing an answer.</p>
<p>What if our Member of Congress or their staffer disagrees with something we say?</p>	<p>First, remember that this rarely happens. Members and their staff meet with you in order to listen to the concerns of their constituents, not to engage in debate. That said, we recommend that you do some research before the meeting to understand the perspective and priorities of that Member of Congress, in part to anticipate points of disagreement and plan for a respectful response. Whatever you do, <i>never get angry or raise your voice with the Member of Congress or their staffer</i>. One of the goals of a Hill meeting is to build a relationship with your congressional representatives. Even if agreement isn't possible, leaving a positive impression of PTA will make it more likely that the congressional office will be receptive to PTA priorities in the future. If disagreement occurs, try to bring the conversation back to the Hill asks and emphasize points of agreement. Another tactic you might use for diffusing tension is to ask your Member of Congress or their staffer clarifying questions. It's possible their disagreement is over a piece of the public policy you're recommending but they share the general goals of that policy.</p>
<p>What if someone is being rude or gets angry?</p>	<p>Situations where someone becomes rude or angry during a Hill meeting are <i>extremely rare</i>. That said, there are several great tactics for diffusing tension during a Hill meeting. First and foremost, always try to bring the conversation back to the Hill asks and emphasize points of agreement. If someone from your group is being rude, you may want to respectfully explain that their perspective does not represent the consensus of the group or ask them to follow up with the office individually since you have limited time to cover many issues. If needed, you can also call the Soapbox Help Desk at 202-362-5910 for their assistance muting participants. Finally, your thank you email following up after the meeting is a great opportunity to apologize and clarify, if needed. Remember that one of the goals of a Hill meeting is to build a relationship with your congressional representatives. Leaving them with a positive impression of PTA will make it more likely that they will be receptive to PTA priorities in the future.</p>
<p>What if I forget to say something during the meeting that I had planned to say?</p>	<p>Don't worry about it! On Thursday March 11th, you will have access to the email addresses for everyone with whom you met. We encourage you to coordinate with your Team and State Leaders to send a thank you email to every congressional office that can include any details you missed.</p>