

A photograph of several farmers working in a field of young green plants, likely lettuce. The farmers are wearing hats and long-sleeved shirts, and are using tools like hoes. The field is filled with rows of vibrant green plants, and the background shows a clear sky and distant trees.

Tour Toolkit: Hosting a VIP At Your Facility



Hosting a Tour of Your Operation

Hometown “in district” engagement is a vital way to provide a first-hand account and illustrate how you work, day in and day out, to provide healthy, safe and affordable food to all Americans. Tours allow your elected officials to see the direct impact on the economy, local community and how federal policies are impacting the growth and success of your business. Members of Congress are precisely interested in the thoughts and opinions of their constituents back home.

Showcasing your business firsthand is a great way to build working relationships for your company and increase support for the fruit and vegetable industry. Likewise, these relationships enable IFPA to reinforce and personalize the power of fresh on Capitol Hill. Staying engaged with your elected officials and regular follow-up can make for a mutually beneficial relationship between you and your member of Congress!

Legislators enjoy getting the opportunity to visit constituents at their place of work. Hosting is a great way to educate them about issues. During recess periods, members of Congress are in their home states to hold events, meet with constituents and work out of their local offices. It is during this time that IFPA members have an extraordinary opportunity to reach out to their legislators and educate them about issues that affect our industry. Below are some tips on how to orchestrate a memorable visit. **It's as easy as 1-2-3-4:**

This template can also be used for local and state legislators.

Website: <https://www.freshproduce.com/resources/advocacy/legislative-tour-toolkit-for-members/>



#1 Invite:

- Choose Timeframe:** Pick a range of dates to accommodate busy legislative schedules, location and topic for your event. The length of a recess can vary from a week to over a month. Consult the current recess calendar for exact dates. Don't host the tour in your off season or when everyone is on lunch break and there is no action happening.
- IFPA staff:** Reach out, [IFPA staff](#) have great resources and will help support your efforts.
- Submit Tour Request:** to the Washington, DC office of your legislator. (*See "Sample Meeting Request Note."*) Effective scheduling is the most important aspect of your event. We suggest emailing the invitation to the [office scheduler](#) they may have the district staff finalize details. If you have previously met with a relevant member of the legislative team, we also recommend sending the same invitation to them, letting them know that you have already made a request with the scheduler. Be sure to call to follow up.

#2 Before The Tour:

- Devil is in the Details:** Share clear logistic information with the Congressional office, including what to wear and not wear (close-toed shoes, rubber sole bottom shoes, etc), an address a GPS understands, where to park, and a name and cell phone number of who will be greeting them.
- "Do's and Don'ts** for hosting an elected official (*See ""Do's and Don'ts""*)
- Create a Run of Show:** (*See "Run of Show Template"*) Ask the scheduler how long the Member will be onsite, times may range from 30 minutes to 2 hours, which significantly changes the flow.
- Determine Roles:** Who in your organization will be involved with planning and executing the meeting and tour? Hold prep meetings to assign duties and touch base on status.
- Choose the Tour Guide with Care:** The guide should be articulate, knowledgeable about the operation as well as issues that concern the company and know by name everyone the legislator is likely to meet. We recommend having 1 Rockstar and 2-3 staff members to help make things run smoothly and answer questions.
- Map Out the Tour:** Develop a tour route and schedule that illustrates the objectives you set for the visit. Allow for extra time if the legislator wants to remain longer in one location.
 - **Participate** in a hands-on activity such as riding/driving a tractor, harvesting the crop, or stuffing food boxes will have a BIG impact and leave a memorable impression on the legislator
 - **People** are who elect legislators, remember, employees are the legislator's constituents, allow for interaction.
 - **Pause** throughout the tour to discuss your site's economic profile and the impact it has on the legislator's district. Examples note the cost of a new tractor or investment in research and development, the amount of water used, sustainability practices
 - **Practice** your route, comments and prepare for possible questions.

- Arrange for Photos:** It's important to designate someone on your team to take photos of the event with permission from the legislator's office. Make sure they know where, when, of what within your operation they are allowed to take photos.
- Notify all Company Team Members about the Upcoming Visit.** (See *"Company Notification Memo"*)
 - Share: Who is coming, Date and Time, Purpose of the visit
 - Reminders to:
 - Keep work areas neat and tidy
 - Wear company gear with logos
 - Do you want them to say anything during the tour? (See *"Team Member Request"*)
- Prepare key equipment and safety gear ahead of time.** Ensure that equipment is operating to provide clear demonstration. Provide safety gear to all participants when necessary.
- Review Industry Priority Issues:** Check out the [latest on the issues](#) that your company is most concerned about and their impact on [our state](#)

#3 Day of Tour:

- Tour Time!** Implement the Run of Show and Tour Map you developed.
- Welcome the Legislator:** Have everyone who will be participating on the tour assembled ahead of time and ready to greet the legislator when they arrive. Confirm when the legislator has to leave, schedules changes, adjust the flow as needed.
- Begin With the Legislator's Remarks:** Allow the legislator to make remarks and answer a few questions from employees prior to you starting the tour. After, while employees return to their stations, you can prepare the legislator for the tour.
- Provide \$, % and #'s and Brief Company Overview:** Before you start on the tour, take a few moments to highlight what a legislator needs to know about your business (See *"5 Facts Your Member of Congress Needs to Know"*)
- Conclude the tour with a nice tasting and brief discussion.** Provide the opportunity to taste your products [if applicable] while answering the legislator's questions and reemphasize key message points!*
- Share Photographs:** Email photos taken during the tour to the legislator staff include thank you remarks, many offices have newsletters of happenings in the district and social media. IFPA would also like to highlight your advocacy, share with grstaff@freshproduce.com



#4 Follow-up After the Visit:

- ❑ **Send a Thank You** (*No later than a week following the meeting*) Following your event, send the member of Congress, and their staff, a handwritten thank you note. If you promised follow-up information, this is a prime opportunity to send it. If the member agreed to take action on legislation, politely remind them or thank them again for taking action.
- ❑ **Tell IFPA About Your Meeting** Email atiwari@freshproduce.com to tell IFPA about your meeting. This information is important in our continued communications with members of Congress.

**Please note: Companies often like to give Members of Congress a branded item from their visit, which is allowable. Please just be aware that House of Representative ethics rules state that a Member or congressional employee may not accept any gift valued over \$50, with a limitation of \$100 in gifts from any single source in a calendar year. Gifts having a value of less than \$10 do not count toward the annual limit.*

If you have any questions at all, please do not hesitate to reach out.

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Tour Toolkit Helpful Quick Links

- IFPA Government Relations Staff: grstaff@freshproduce.com
- Congressional Office Schedulers: <https://www.quorum.us/spreadsheet/external/lscjLnrTsGDHLmNDlcGi/>
- District Director: <https://www.quorum.us/spreadsheet/external/abrqTRsZIPNSJVzwQWmv/>
- Congressional Calendar: https://www.freshproduce.com/contentassets/f768e3a749bb4c178a343ba70d690351/2023_congressional-calendar_ifpa.ashx.pdf
- “Do’s and Don’ts”: <https://www.freshproduce.com/siteassets/files/advocacy/tour-toolkit/dos-and-donts-of-hosting-an-elected-official-or-their-staff-final.docx>
- 5 Facts Your Member of Congress Needs to Know: <https://www.freshproduce.com/siteassets/files/advocacy/tour-toolkit/22ifpa-knowbeforeyougo-operation-tour.pdf>
- Run of Show Template: <https://www.freshproduce.com/siteassets/files/advocacy/tour-toolkit/run-of-show-for-tour.xlsx>
- Company Notification Memo: <https://www.freshproduce.com/siteassets/files/advocacy/tour-toolkit/company-notification-memo.docx>
- Team Member Request: <https://www.freshproduce.com/siteassets/files/advocacy/tour-toolkit/team-member-request.docx>
- Priority Issues: <https://www.freshproduce.com/advocacy/priority-issues/>
- State Profiles: <https://www.freshproduce.com/resources/advocacy/fruit-and-vegetable-state-profiles/>



2023 Congressional Calendar



January

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
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29	30	31				

February

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June

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August

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October

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November

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December

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31						

House in Session

Senate in Session

Federal Holiday

House and Senate in Session

Do's

- **Be flexible for the date/time of your tour.** Members of Congress maintain busy schedules. Demonstrating respect to the Congressional scheduler and their workload goes a long way.
- **Do your homework.** Read the Member's bio, any relevant committees, and scour their official social media page to identify key messages, values, and priorities. Ask your Congressional staff if there is anything in particular that the member would like to better understand. Adapt your presentation points accordingly.
- **Connect with IFPA** early to identify relevant policy issues of the day that would impact your company and any pertinent information about that member/staffer.
- **Write a briefing memo.** A week out from your event, provide a one page memo to Congressional staff with key information that will get the member up to speed on your company. Include:
 - Background on your company
 - Key individuals on tour, a brief bio, and their photo (include links to LinkedIn pages. It saves staffers the step of having to find you and connect.)
 - Any key messages (asks) that you will cover. This helps the Member prepare for a conversation, rather than just a presentation.
- **Sell it to your staff.** Many of your team members may be unfamiliar with the political process or what this visit means. Use this opportunity to build up your team. Let them know what an honor it is that they've been selected for a tour, and explain that this is something to be proud of. This will instill confidence in your team and pave the way for a positive interaction.
- **Gather %, \$ and #s** For example, include the total number of employees in the field/processing as well as the # employees in offices, amount of payroll, taxes, the products your company produces, where the Congressmen can personally purchase them, amount of and local expenditures for materials and services beyond agriculture you support by being in business (example bag manufactures, marketing firms, banks or equipment companies). These are all great facts to weave into the tour discussion.

Don'ts

- **Try to do everything on your first visit.** Your objective is to establish yourself as a trustworthy and reputable resource to the office both now and in the future.
- **Invite more than one Representative/Senator**
- **Invite the press the first time out**
- **Stray away from your key topics.** Master the art of pivoting back to your key points. Now is not the time to weigh in on your political opinion or try and persuade the member on a non-relevant topic (ex. Making your elementary school a national historic site.)
- **Make up the answer** You'll likely be asked something that you don't know the answer too. That's ok! Let the staff member know that you'll look into it and get back with them. Do not come up with an answer on the fly, especially if it is not factual.
- **Ignore Employees** Be sure to introduce employees, they are the legislator's constituents too and the backbone to your company

5 FACTS YOUR MEMBER OF CONGRESS NEEDS TO KNOW

Before your Member of Congress joins you at your operation, there are a few “quick facts” you should have at the ready for your tour. Being prepared fosters a successful meeting and helps you make the most out of the Legislator’s trip to your business. These may be facts you gloss over at times, but don’t forget to lay the foundation for them.

1

Provide history and overview

Before you jump into key issues, take a moment to provide background about you, your organization, and the impact on the legislator’s district or state.

2

Share %, \$ and #s

For example, include the total number of employees in the field, in the office, or in your organization. Where can he/she buy your product?

3

Explain your reach

Share how your operation affects the entire community. What type and how many jobs in the community does your business support? Think broadly.

4

Give them the facts

Members of Congress will want to know the basics: years in operation, acreage, number of schools you service or quantity of retail locations. Give them facts they can relate to or visualize.

5

Let them know how they can help

What are the biggest federal regulation challenges that you face?

IFPA Tour Toolkit: RUN OF SHOW SHEET

EVENT DETAILS			
Name of Member of Congress			
Date of Visit			
Time of Visit			
Organizer			
ATTENDEE DETAILS AND CONTACT INFORMATION			
Main Contact for Member Name			
Contact Information (Phone & Email)			
Name of Attendees: (insert more lines if needed)	Email	Phone	
WAREHOUSE TOUR(S)	Given By	Notes	
PRESENTATIONS	By	TIME	NOTES
Meal			
Presentation & Tasting			
Other Presentation			
Q & A			
TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES			
Task	Assigned To	Status	Notes
Room Set Up			
Tasting Product Order			
Meal Order			
AV NEEDS			
Swag & Handouts			
Vests & Hairnets			
Misc.			
TIMELINE (Examples)			
9:00 AM - 9:10 AM	Arrival & Greeting		
9:10 AM - 10:05 AM	Tour #1 & #2		
10:05 AM - 10:25 AM	Tasting & Q & A		
10:30 AM	Departure		
Follow Up			
Task	Assigned To	Status	Notes
Thank you notes sent to visitors			
Notification to IFPA Sent			

IFPA Tour Toolkit: Sample Company Notification Memo to Announce the Visit

Good morning team,

We will be hosting a tour for {Name of Representative}'s team this {Date} from {time}. They will be joined by [Staffer's Name].

[INSERT THE WHY] Because so much of our work centers around schools (who receive government funding), it is important for us to have a strong relationship and positive rapport with our elected officials. The Senator's office is taking a vested interest in our company and specifically the work we do on behalf of USDA for schools.

- Managers: Please share with your teams that I will be bringing around a special guest on Tuesday afternoon.
- Team members are encouraged to wear [Company Name] branded swag (vests, pullovers, hoodies, etc.).
- At Fresh-cut Processing Operations: since the staffer will be here right at shift change, I'll connect with y'all separately to determine the best time to bring him to production. This was the only time that worked for his schedule.
- ALL: Please ensure your workspace is clean and tidy before leaving (clean up loose papers, remove trash, etc.).

[INSERT BACKGROUND] This Representatives/staffer's policy portfolio includes food, agriculture, nutrition, environment, and natural resources. He is responsible for having an in-depth understanding of these issues and advising the Senator to introduce legislation, vote for/against specific bills or use his platform to champion specific issues. This tour was solicited by the Senator's office, which is a great sign that our name is out there as trusted, reputable partners for government, and that we are worth getting to know.

Don't hesitate to connect with me if you have any questions!

Thank you,
[Your name]

IFPA Tour Toolkit: Team Member Speaker Request – Draft email Message

{Name of Team Member}

As I have prepared for our tour, I was reflecting on who I want {staffer or representative} to meet while HE/SHE is here. You were top of mind. Our organization and our mission {Company Mission} is strong because of you. You are smart, take tremendous ownership of your role, are an excellent manager, and someone who builds a culture of excellence here. I want to show that off.

If you are open to it, I'd love to build a little time for {staffer or representative} to hear your story and what your ambitions are here at {Company Name} and for your career. It is likely that we will see him/her again when we are in Washington, DC in September, so this would be an excellent start to the professional relationship.

Let me know what you think and thank you for considering,

{Your Name}