



In-District Lobby Days May 28-June 1, 2007 Planning Guide

During the Global Days for Darfur, activists attended over 500 events in 47 states and 50 countries around the world. Now that the Global Days are over, we are asking our activists to meet with their Representative and Senators during the Memorial Day congressional recess, May 28-June 1, 2007.

As the lobby days draw closer, we'll be issuing a specific set of policy points and legislation to ask representatives to sign onto. If your member has a poor record on Darfur, this is the perfect opportunity to educate him or her on the issues. If he or she is already a leader for Darfur, it is important that you thank them for their previous support and urge them to continue their efforts.

YOU can help pressure Congress to do more to help the people of Darfur by meeting with your congressional representative or members of his or her staff.

This planning guide outlines the steps for planning an in-district lobby meeting with your representative.

Why Lobby Meetings? Why Now?

Lobby meetings are an effective way of getting your views across to decision makers. The in-district lobby meetings can help put pressure on elected officials to act meaningfully to stop the genocide in Darfur.

There are many tools Congress has at its disposal that can help stop the genocide. Some of these tools include:

- ⇒ Sanctions: Congress can pass legislation putting in place additional sanctions against the Government of Sudan and Sudanese officials responsible for the genocide.
- ⇒ Divestment: There are now bills in both the House and the Senate that would put into law the ability of states to divest from companies that help fund the genocide. Some of these bills also bar U.S. agencies from giving government contracts to companies that help fund the genocide
- ⇒ Funding: Congress can (and has in the past) appropriated funding for humanitarian aid as well as a future peacekeeping force.
- ⇒ Darfur Peace and Accountability Act (DPAA): Congress passed the DPAA in the fall, yet some of its provisions remain un-enforced. Members of Congress can demand that the DPAA be enforced.

Members of Congress also wear many different hats that allow them to be effective advocates for Darfur in several ways:

- ⇒ Authoring, co-sponsoring and voting for legislation.
- ⇒ Signing onto letters to the President, demanding more action to stop the genocide
- ⇒ Being a public advocate for Darfur, both locally in their districts as well as nationally. Members of Congress can attract press and attention to the issue in a way that others cannot.

Today we are at a crossroads: The United States has recognized the conflict in Darfur as a genocide, but has not acted to stop it; Congress has passed the DPAA, but parts of it remain un-enforced; the Administration gave Sudan a deadline of January 1st before Plan B would take effect– but that deadline has long passed. The time is now for our leaders to turn their words into real action for the people of Darfur.



Step 1: Schedule Your Lobby Visit

The first step in planning your lobby visit is scheduling your meeting. Since congress members' schedules often fill up quickly, it's best to contact them as soon as possible. Here's how to schedule your visit:

Find Your Representative: Visit congress.org and type in your zip code to find your member of congress.

Send a Meeting Request by email or fax to the Scheduler in your representative's office

⇒ Attach a news clipping from your Global Days event— attach a press report to your fax or include one in your email

⇒ See the template meeting request included in this guide.

Place a Follow-up Call to the Scheduler in your representative's office.

⇒ See the sample phone script included in this guide.

Post Your Event Online on the Save Darfur website so others can sign up to get involved!

⇒ Visit www.savedarfur.org/page/event/create to post your event online.

⇒ Select "Lobbying" as the event type.

TIP: Be flexible! The more flexible your schedule is, the more likely your representative will be able to meet.

TIP: Be persistent (politely)! It is important that our elected leaders hear our voices NOW, at this critical time of action for Darfur. Tell the congressional offices how many supporters your Save Darfur group has, and that you represent many other constituents in your request for a meeting.

Step 2: Recruiting Attendees

Recruit community and activist leaders to take part in your lobby day. As you build the group of attendees for your lobby meeting, keep in mind the following:

Aim for 3-6 participants for your meeting— more than 6 people can lower the effectiveness of your meeting.

Make your group as strategic as possible, sending the message that the entire community is demanding action to stop the genocide.

The most effective participants will be people who can represent their communities, and those who may have ties with the representative. Also, the meeting may be a great opportunity to bring in influential groups that have not been as active on Darfur issues in the past. Examples could include:

⇒ Clergy and leaders of religious communities that have been active on Darfur.

⇒ Activists from your local Save Darfur group who have been diligent and vocal on this issue.

⇒ Other community leaders (leaders of cultural, humanitarian and community groups).

Plan on being assertive at your meeting. Go to the meeting with specific items that you want your Representative to work towards and do not be afraid to tell the Representative or his or her staff that you will be following up in a specific amount of time to see what has developed after your meeting.

TIP: When recruiting for your meeting, keep in mind the topics various participants will be discussing:
⇒ An overview of local Darfur activism and recent events
⇒ Each policy ask
⇒ Meeting facilitation, and someone to be a contact for future communication with the representative's office.

TIP: If there are people who cannot make it to the meeting but want to be a part of the campaign, ask them to write a letter that you can present to your member of Congress. A sample letter will be included in the Lobby Packet two weeks ahead of the lobby meetings.



Step 3: Prepare and Practice for Your Visit

Gather Endorsements. Contact the list of organizations who will not be able to attend the meeting, and ask if you can add them to a letter supporting the policy demands you will be making. Then bring the letter to your meeting to show support from the community.

Research Your Rep. Check to see if your member of Congress has taken any other action on Darfur. Visit www.darfurscores.org to review how they have voted on past legislation.

Review Recent News. Brush up on the latest developments on the ground in Darfur. Check out www.savedarfur.org for the latest updates on the situation in Darfur.

Hold a Pre-Meeting Training. About two weeks before your visit, bring together your group for a simple, informal preparation and training session. This is best done face-to-face, but can also be done on a conference call. In this session, figure out two to three items that you will be asking for. Decide who will say what and identify one specific leader to facilitate the meeting. Also, arrange for your group to meet somewhere close to the congressional office 30 minutes before your meeting to review your agenda and plans.

TIP: If you are meeting with your representative, plan for each session to last between 20 and 30 minutes. If you are meeting with staff, plan for the meeting to last about an hour.

TIP: Once you've got everyone assembled, you can follow the outline for the training session (Document 3).

Step 4: Visit Your Congressperson's Local Office

Your meeting day has arrived! Here are a few things to keep in mind for your visit:

Use our Lobby Meeting Packet for information on how to run your lobby meeting and a sample materials to bring with you. We'll be issuing an updated packet about 2 weeks prior to the lobby days.

Confirm your meeting with the member's office a couple days before your visit.

⇒ Arrange a future contact or meeting with the representative's staff to follow up on the congressperson's commitments.

Step 5: Follow-Up

The most important part of the lobby meeting is the follow-up that takes place afterward. We'll be sending out some follow-up instructions as a part of the lobby day packet (2 weeks prior to the lobby days). Here are some basic steps to follow-up on your meeting:

Ask for a specific staff member to serve as a point of contact, and get contact information for that person.

Set up a time with the staff contact to follow-up on commitments your representative made during the meeting.

Invite your representative to speak at one of your Darfur events and/or ask if he would participate in a town hall meeting in your community on Darfur.



Sample Meeting Request Letter/Email

May 3, 2007

The Honorable **[First Name] [Last Name]**

Attn: Scheduler
U.S. House of Representatives
Street Address
City, State Zip
VIA FACSIMILE: **[fax number]**

Dear Representative **[First Name] [Last Name]**:

I am writing to request a meeting with you in your **[name of city where district office is located]** office during the Memorial Day recess, May 26-June 1, 2007. I, along with other community leaders, would like to discuss upcoming legislation and opportunities aimed at stopping the genocide in Darfur.

I am the chair of **[name of your group/organization]**, a local Darfur activist organization that works nationally with the Save Darfur Coalition. We have **[x#]** of supporters and **[x#]** of organizations and places of worship as part of our local coalition.

This summer, we have an opportunity to make significant strides towards achieving our goals of peace and protection for the people of Darfur. We look forward to working with you on this issue.

I will contact you shortly regarding the possibility of scheduling this meeting. In the meantime, you can contact me at **[insert phone number]** or **[insert email]** if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]
[Name of Organization]



Sample Phone Script

Follow-up after your letter request for a meeting

Use this call script to guide your conversation with your representative's staff members.

“Hi, my name is **[insert your name here]** and I am calling on behalf of **[name of your group/organization]**. I would like to speak with the legislative aid who focuses on Africa.

[Wait to be transferred]

Hi, my name is **[insert your name here]** and I am calling on behalf of **[name of your group/organization]**, which is a local Darfur activist organization that works nationally with the Save Darfur Coalition. Locally, we have **[x#]** of supporters and **[x#]** of organizations and places of worship as part of our regional coalition.

I am following up on my earlier **[fax or letter]** sent on **[insert date here]** requesting a district meeting with Representative **[insert name here]** during the Memorial Day recess to talk about the situation in Darfur and upcoming opportunities aimed at stopping the genocide. There would be about **[x#]** of us attending this meeting

Did your office receive the meeting request that we sent?

Great! It's important that we meet with Representative **[insert name here]** during the Memorial Day recess, because we have an opportunity this summer to make significant strides towards achieving peace and protection for the people of Darfur.

When would be the best time for Representative **[insert name here]** be able to meet?

Great!

[Set the meeting time]

Thank you for your time and I look forward to meeting with you and **[insert Representative's name here]** on **[insert date of your meeting and time here]**.”

TIP: Ask for the aid's email address. At the end of the call send a confirmation email of the time and date of your meeting. You may also want to call a day or two in advance of your meeting to confirm the date and time.

TIP: Often times you may have to follow-up more than once to schedule your appointment. It may take longer to make the appointment because your goal will be to meet with the member directly, not just the aid. Be persistent.

TIP: Ask for the aid's email address. If you have to leave a message, say your name and the group you are with, and leave a number you can be reached at. Make sure to say that you have already sent in a letter requesting a meeting. Also mention that you will follow-up with another call by the end of the day or the next morning.



Planning Timeline

4 Weeks Out: Schedule Your Lobby Visit

- ⇒ Find your representative by visiting congress.org and typing in your zip code.
- ⇒ Send a meeting request to the scheduler in your representative's office.
- ⇒ Post your event online by visiting the www.savedarfur.org/page/event/create so others can get involved!

3 Weeks Out: Recruiting Attendees

- ⇒ Recruit community and activists leaders to take part in your lobby day.
- ⇒ Find effective participants (clergy and leaders of religious communities, activists from your local Save Darfur group and other community leaders of cultural and humanitarian groups).

1-2 Weeks Out: Prepare and Practice for Your Visit

As your congressional visit approaches:

- ⇒ Ask various organizations in your coalition to sign your letter of support and bring this letter with you to the meeting.
- ⇒ Review recent developments on the ground in Darfur.
- ⇒ Bring your group together for an informal preparation session. Use the training outline we'll be distributing to guide your training session.

2 Days Out: Confirm Your Meeting

- ⇒ Confirm your meeting with the member's office a couple of days before your visit

Day of: Visit Your Congressperson's Local Office

- ⇒ Make sure to check out our Lobby Meeting Packet for information on how to run your lobby meeting and sample materials to bring.
- ⇒ Arrange a contact with the representative's staff to follow up on the congressperson's commitments.

Follow-Up

- ⇒ Ask a specific person to serve as a point of contact.
- ⇒ Set up time with the staff contact to follow-up on your representative's commitments
- ⇒ Invite your representative to participate at one of your Darfur events or participate in a town hall meeting on Darfur.