

# NORPAC

## Washington Mission Handbook

Welcome to NORPAC's annual Mission to Washington.  
We hope this handbook will help answer some of your questions.

Together we will strengthen the US-Israel relationship and aid the survival  
of Israel, the Jewish Homeland, and the Middle East's sole democracy.

## **I. Why We're Going to Washington**

### **A. Purpose of the annual Mission to Washington**

The Mission serves several purposes in strengthening the US-Israel relationship crucial to both nations. Most importantly, it provides an opportunity for you to meet face to face with Senators, Representatives, and their staff, to discuss issues of vital importance. This input gained from these meetings is a vital component of NORPAC's decision-making process to determine which candidates to support.

A second objective of the Mission is to form relationships with Members of Congress to facilitate the dissemination of accurate and timely information relevant to Middle East affairs generally, and in particular, to those concerning Israel.

A right of every American citizen is to vote and participate in the democratic process. To be a part of this process in action is an exciting experience which no citizen of the US should forego.

### **B. Education of Mission Participants**

Mission participants receive numerous briefings, starting with our Mission Training Session and continuing during the bus ride to Washington and over lunch with Members of Congress who will come to address and engage in discussions with the participants. Thereafter, you will attend scheduled meetings with selected Congressional offices. The briefings and meetings will address a range of issues vital to anyone concerned with the well-being of Israel and the US-Israel relationship.

You will obtain a fascinating education as to the political process in Washington. It gives life to the headlines that you see in the newspapers and gives you an understanding beyond what you get watching the nightly news. Hopefully, this understanding will motivate you to take a more active role through letter writing, follow-up phone calls, meetings, and encouraging others to participate in the political process.

### **C. Impact of the Mission to Washington**

The effects of the Mission to Washington should not be underestimated. The old "tip of the iceberg" concept applies. When a Member of Congress sees bus-loads of concerned citizens, voters, and contributors taking a day off their usual activities to speak on a particular issue, it is often an indication of a larger constituency with the same concern. Your vital activity is multiplied.

## **II. Logistics and Administrative Matters**

### **What to Take With You**

THE LESS YOU BRING THE BETTER. Whatever you have with you at 6:00 a.m. when you board the bus will assuredly weigh ten times as much by the time you get back on the bus around 5:45 p.m. for the return trip. The more you carry, the more tedious clearing security will be in each building you enter. While you may think a book is necessary for the trip, more likely your time will be engaged in discussions, presentations, and so forth.

TAKE ALONG a collapsible umbrella and/or raincoat in the event of rain, since there will be a substantial amount of outside walking. For the same reason, comfortable shoes are essential.

BRING business cards since you might be asked to leave one with the Member of Congress. Print "NORPAC" on the cards before handing them out. Extra cards are useful since the aides or assistants to the Member of Congress may also request them.

## **III. What You Will Do in Washington**

### **A. How to Conduct Yourself at Meetings**

The entire day will be conducted in a professional manner. Conservative business attire, briefcases, and the like are appropriate.

### **B. Meeting Guidelines**

#### **1. Before the Meeting**

Attend the Mission Training Session. This will add to your comfort and to NORPAC's professionalism.

Review and understand the list of talking points which will be made available to you.

Review background material on the Members of Congress you will be meeting. Visit <http://www.vote-smart.org/index.htm> for brief bios and links to Congressional websites.

Make sure you are wearing a tag that identifies your name and NORPAC affiliation.

Be punctual! Call ahead to the Congressional office if a real problem arises.

#### **2. Waiting for the Meeting, and Greeting**

Arrive on time.

If the aide asks you to wait to meet with the Member of Congress, sit patiently in the waiting room. If the wait may cause a timing conflict with other meetings you have, split your group in two, with one component going to the next scheduled meeting and the other remaining for the first meeting. It is essential that no one be late for a meeting and that the NORPAC Mission be represented in a professional manner. Therefore, do not hesitate to break up the group where necessary.

If the Member of Congress is in a hearing, ask the aide if you can be taken to the hearing room to meet briefly with the Member in a side room for 5 to 10 minutes.

CONGRESSIONAL STAFF ARE KEY PLAYERS. DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE THEIR IMPORTANCE. If the Member of Congress is unavailable, meet with the aide. Make no assumption about the status of the individuals with whom you meet. It is far wiser and safer to treat them with the same dignity and respect you would the Senator or Representative than to risk offending anyone.

The group leader should briefly introduce the group members and say a word about NORPAC and our purpose, e.g.,

“Congressman / Senator \_\_\_\_\_, thank you for your time. We are members of NORPAC – the largest pro-Israel PAC in the United States. We have come to discuss the current situation in the Middle East and the US-Israel relationship.”

### **3. Meeting with the Senator or Representative’s Staff**

When you first get to your meeting location you will likely pass through an outer office where you will be met by an aide or assistant to the Member of Congress. The first thing you should do is advise this person that you are with NORPAC and that you have an appointment. This is necessary since all meetings are based on previously scheduled appointments.

Do not be upset or alarmed if the Member of Congress is late or does not make the meeting. Emergency votes do arise. The Member of Congress’ staff members are key players in the political process, since Senators and Representatives rely heavily on them to distill and communicate information to them on key points. Conduct your meeting with the staff in the same manner that you would with the Member of Congress. See the points below, “At the Meeting.”

### **4. At the Meeting**

- **Be courteous.** Thank the Member of Congress for their time. Even if you disagree with their views, do not argue or become angered. Honest people can disagree agreeably. If the Member of Congress is uncommitted, don’t press. Leave room for further discussion. Follow-up with them after the Mission. If the Member of Congress agrees with our position, ask for advice and his/her cooperation in reaching others who do not.

### Putting it into practice

“NORPAC wants me to report back on whether or not you will be cosponsoring this bill. What would you like me to tell them?”

If the Member of Congress says yes to bill cosponsorship, say “thank you” and move on to the next point. If they say they need to review the bill or that they are undecided, you can say:

“Can I check back with you in a week to see if you have any questions about the legislation?” The group leader should call or email the aide every few weeks until they learn of the decision.

If they say no to cosponsorship, you can say something like:

“Please help me understand your concerns about the bill. Can you suggest an amendment to make it more acceptable?”

- **Be specific.** You can help sympathetic legislators by providing sound supporting facts.
- **Stay on point – Israel.** After the introductions, do not stray from the main issue, Israel. We have provided issues and talking points.
- **Be honest.** If you are asked a question you cannot answer, say so. If the legislator wants facts or data which you do not have, say that you will mail them. Be certain to mention this in your follow-up evaluation and follow-up to be certain that the promised materials are, in fact, mailed.
- **Listen carefully.** When you meet with the Member of Congress, review the current talking points and most importantly, LISTEN. Attempt to identify any concerns which the Senator or Representative may have and make a mental note of these points. Legislators choose their words with precision. Did he say “I sympathize with your position” or “I will support your position”? (Only the latter is a commitment).
- **Visiting Israel.** Ask the Member of Congress if he/she has been to Israel and would like our assistance in setting up a first-time or return visit. If yes, make sure to mention this in the evaluation form. (Unfortunately, we cannot currently offer such a trip to Congressional staff.)
- **Create an opportunity for further communication.** This lets the legislator know you will be following his/her vote and that you would like to establish a longer-term channel of communication.

- **Conclude the meeting on time.** Be sensitive to the legislator's time constraints and appreciative that he or she took time out to meet with us. Meetings typically last no longer than 15-20 minutes. Upon leaving each meeting, the group leader should fill out an evaluation form with input from the group. The leader will hand these forms to the Mission Chair before the buses depart from Washington.
- **Leave fact sheets.** If you have material which you have been instructed to leave with the Member of Congress, please do not forget to do so.
- **Say thanks.** Following your meeting, be certain to thank the Member of Congress and/or staff for their time, interest, and assistance and offer to provide them with any additional information should they so desire.
- **Get a business card from the aide.** This can be useful for later correspondence or telephone calls in the future.

#### **IV. Issues to Discuss – Talking Points+**

Each year the key talking points will change depending on the current issues of most pressing importance to Israel and to US-Israel relations. There are other points which will also be important to make. For example, the Member of Congress who supported a particular piece of legislation important to Israel in the prior year should be thanked for that support.

Where a Senator or Representative has recently been elected, or re-elected, you should congratulate him/her on that victory. In addition to reviewing the current agenda for Congressional meetings which will be provided to you, you should also review beforehand some biographical information on the Members of Congress with whom you will meet in order to identify specific “thank you’s” and other points which you can make. You can find such information at <http://www.vote-smart.org/index.htm>

#### **V. Background on Talking Points and Issues Affecting US-Israel Relations**

NORPAC is a group of diverse, politically-involved supporters of Israel. Each year, NORPAC's leadership spends a great deal of time creating the items on our Mission agenda. It is expected that Mission participants stick to these issues and convey NORPAC's position.

Bickering about Israel while in a Congressional office, or bringing up issues of your own agenda outside of those chosen for the NORPAC Mission, is strictly forbidden. We have only minutes to make a strong and consistent presentation.

## VI. Evaluations

Each group leader should complete an evaluation form with input from the group after each of the afternoon meetings with Congressional offices. All evaluation forms should be submitted to the bus leader, who will forward them to the Mission Chair.

Advise NORPAC if you believe that a Member of Congress or aide:

- Is weak on certain issues
- Needs more information on any aspect of US-Israel relations
- Wants to go to Israel (Member of Congress only)

## VII. It Doesn't End When You Get Home – Follow-up is Vital

### A. Write a Thank You Note

The note may be emailed, faxed or snail mailed.

Traditional mail may be delayed because of security precautions.

Member of Congress fax #'s are available at web sites like [www.vote-smart.org](http://www.vote-smart.org)

Email is the most direct way to contact individual Congressional staffers. If you obtained a business card of the staffer you met, the email address will likely be listed.

Email addresses of House staff follow this rule:

<first name>.<lastname>@mail.house.gov

Example: John Smith's email will be john.smith@mail.house.gov

On the Senate side, email addresses follow this rule:

<first name>\_<lastname>@<Senator's lastname>.senate.gov

Example: John Smith works for Senator Wingding. Smith's email address is john\_smith@wingding.senate.gov

When writing:

- Be polite
- Write in short, readable paragraphs, generally not to exceed one page in length
- Use personal or professional letterhead, which carries more weight than a sheet of plain stationary (if using snail mail)
- Send a copy of your letter and any responses from the Congressional office to NORPAC, PO Box 5595, Englewood, NJ 07631 or email to [feedback@norpac.net](mailto:feedback@norpac.net)

-----sample letter-----

Date

Your Name  
 Street Address  
 City, State, Zip  
 Your phone number

The Honorable [First and Last Name of Member of Congress]  
 [The Senate or House building]  
 Washington, DC 20510 / 20515

Dear Senator / Representative [Last Name]:

I enjoyed meeting you last week as part of NORPAC's annual Mission to Washington. As you recall, we discussed [describe talking points you discussed].

In addition, [describe any additional points which you discussed].

I appreciate your support on [describe bills supported by Member of Congress].

Sincerely,

Your Name

**B. Attend Future Meetings with Legislators You Have Met**

Stay alert for notices of future meetings which you might wish to attend to hear the same Senators or Representatives you met or heard speak while on the Mission to Washington.

**C. Continued Contacts are Encouraged**

When issues arise of importance to Israel, whether they are mentioned in the NORPAC mailings or in other literature which you read, do not hesitate to send a friendly note to the Member of Congress you met, perhaps with a clipping of the article discussing the issue. Ongoing correspondence and contact are essential for developing the types of relationships that are indispensable in the political process.

When a critical matter arises, a telephone call, fax, or even Federal Express package to the Member of Congress can carry even greater weight by demonstrating the importance to you of the issue involved.

Whenever you need guidance or input about a letter or contact to be made, do not hesitate to call any of the NORPAC officers. Also, be certain to forward a copy of your facsimile, correspondence, or other communication to the NORPAC office.

NORPAC, PO Box 5595, Englewood, NJ 07631

NORPAC members are often able to speak directly with a Member of Congress. Do not underestimate the importance of your visit or the impact of later follow-up communication.

### **VIII. Help NORPAC Grow and Improve**

#### **A. Join NORPAC**

If you are not a member, join NORPAC. A membership form should be included in the packet of materials you receive Mission day, or you can make a contribution at [www.norpac.net](http://www.norpac.net). You can also call 201-788-5133 for further information.

Political donations are limited to small amounts by law, so we must gather our funds and support from a broad base of people. Please give as generously as you can; these dollars go a long way, and there is much to be done.

Encourage friends to join our email list using the “Join” option on every page of [www.norpac.net](http://www.norpac.net), and volunteer to host a Member of Congress in your home.

#### **B. Tell NORPAC How to Improve**

Your suggestions and comments are welcome. Every year we improve because of the efforts of our outstanding volunteers.

#### **THE BOTTOM LINE –**

Our political action committee (PAC) offers the greatest leverage of our resources.  
Don't leave the PAC behind – join NORPAC today!

(revised 12/06)