



**SIERRA
CLUB**
FOUNDED 1892

PREPARING FOR A MEETING WITH A MEMBER OF CONGRESS OR HIS/HER STAFF

- **STEP ONE: Make the Call**

A phone call identifying yourself, explaining your purpose, identifying the proper staff person in the office, and seeking an appointment. Tell them who you are representing – whatever your specific organization is locally and the Utah Wilderness Coalition (which is led by Earth Justice, the Natural Resources Defense Council, Sierra Club, the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, The Wasatch Mountain Club, and The Wilderness Society plus 200 other organizations and businesses across Utah and the U.S.A.) and that you would like to schedule a meeting of 15 – 20 minutes to discuss a piece of legislation, “America’s Red Rock Wilderness Act”. Start by asking for a meeting with the Member, but don’t turn down a meeting with staff.

- **STEP TWO: Gather Materials**

Get one or more people to go with you. Everyone should meet outside the office just prior to the appointed time and enter together. *It is generally helpful to review quickly with everyone what the purpose of the meeting is, the questions you are seeking answers to, and the individual roles of those present.* One of you should be the primary spokesperson and one should be assigned primarily to listen and make sure you get a clear response to your request. Bring a few materials to leave, not an overwhelming amount. Something with pictures is good, if you have a photograph of your family/friends in Utah’s red rock country that is a nice plus. Most members and staff are likely to know little about the legislation – focus on the basics and why it is personally important to you.

- **STEP THREE: The Meeting**

Begin with a thank you – something good s/he’s done for the environment. Next make “the ask”: you are there to encourage the Member to become a cosponsor of “America’s Red Rock Wilderness Act”. Offer two brief reasons why you are concerned about protecting the land. Pick the two that you think are most persuasive. If you’ve got personal experience that should get a mention. Briefly describe the legislation: that Sen. Durbin/Rep. Hinchey is the lead sponsor, that it will designate public lands in Utah as wilderness that this is the highest protection for deserving lands that U.S. law allows. Briefly describe the land -- here some pictures or brochures with pictures would be useful. Be sure to note how spectacular it is and that it is thus of national, indeed worldwide, significance.

Briefly describe the threats, damage by off-road vehicles and oil and gas development are generally good ones to focus on. They’ll have a few questions so I’ll make some guesses at what they might be:

Why do people in your state care? Answers: the land is of such quality that it has

earned it; many people visit it and care deeply about it; many people are aware of it and want it protected so they can visit it. It is public land and just like the Grand Canyon or the Indiana Dunes/Apostle Islands/Boundary Waters/Pictured Rocks, deserves support of people from across the country.

What do people in Utah think about it? Answer: most Utahns support it, but it is controversial. Recent years have shown an increasing level of support for wilderness designation from the Utah congressional delegation. Rep. Bishop was the lead sponsor of a bill that established the Cedar Mountains wilderness and Sen. Bennett recently negotiated and passed a good version of his bill for Wilderness in southwest Utah's Zion-Mojave region.

When is it going to come to a vote? It is not likely to be voted on in 2009 but we are building our support in hopes of Committee hearings in anticipation of action in 2010. There is growing support in the current Congress for further designation of wilderness lands in Utah.

End the conversation by making sure the response you get to the "ask" about cosponsorship is clear to all (if you meet with a staff person, they will probably need to get back to you). Find out when you should get back to them for a response.

If there are any things they are to get for you or you are to get for them make sure there is a clear understanding of what they are and approximately when those items will be taken care of.

A couple of things to look out for: it would not be unusual if they sought to divert the conversation to other items or a more casual content. Be polite, but always steer it back to the topic you came to discuss. It is also surprisingly easy to get out of such a meeting without a clear answer (even if it's just we'll be getting back to you) about the main question you came to ask. **Be sure you get a response to the cosponsorship question.**

If they disagree (odds are they will have questions but not actually disagree), feel free to discuss the matter, but don't get into an argument. Lastly, don't feel like you need to be an expert. You are the expert on what you think and who you represent and that is the main authority you will need. You are likely to know way more about the matter than the person you are meeting with – even if it is the Member. If there is something you don't know, be upfront about not knowing it and say you'll get the information for him/her.

- **STEP FOUR: Follow Up**

Send the person you met with a thank you note. In it politely state that you are looking forward to a positive response to your request. If there were any questions for which you were to be providing follow-up answers that can be included as well. Report the results of the meeting to the UWC staff person with whom you are dealing. Call the person you met with in two weeks (or at an agreed upon time) to get a progress report.