



# NAHRO 2026

## Hill Day Tool Kit

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### **Greetings, NAHRO Advocate!**

It is my distinct pleasure to extend a warm welcome to all participants of NAHRO's 2026 Capitol Hill Day. Whether you're attending for the first time or returning, your presence is greatly appreciated as we come together to advocate for our communities.

This year, our advocacy is more vital than ever. Affordable housing remains a significant challenge across the country. Many communities are facing rising housing costs, a shortage of homes, and more families struggling to find safe, affordable places to live. The need for affordable housing continues to grow; however, the resources are not enough to meet this demand.

By participating in Capitol Hill Day, you demonstrate to Congress that the affordable housing crisis demands urgent action. When meeting with your Members of Congress, remember that building relationships is essential for creating change. Share real stories and challenges from your communities. They want to hear about the real impact on their constituents. It's these personal connections that can influence policymakers.

Thank you for your dedication and for standing up for affordable housing. Together, we can help shape policies that foster real opportunities and brighter futures for the families we serve.

Yours in housing,

#### **Yvonda Bean**

Chair, Legislative Network Advisory Committee

Hill Day is an important opportunity for NAHRO advocates to show our elected representatives that our work matters – both individually and as a group of hundreds of housers from across the nation. We should bring not just our funding and policy recommendations, but also the stories of the communities we serve: the working families, the striving students, and the seniors and veterans in need of care. Thank you for the vital work you do, and thank you for taking the time to represent your communities here in the nation's capital.

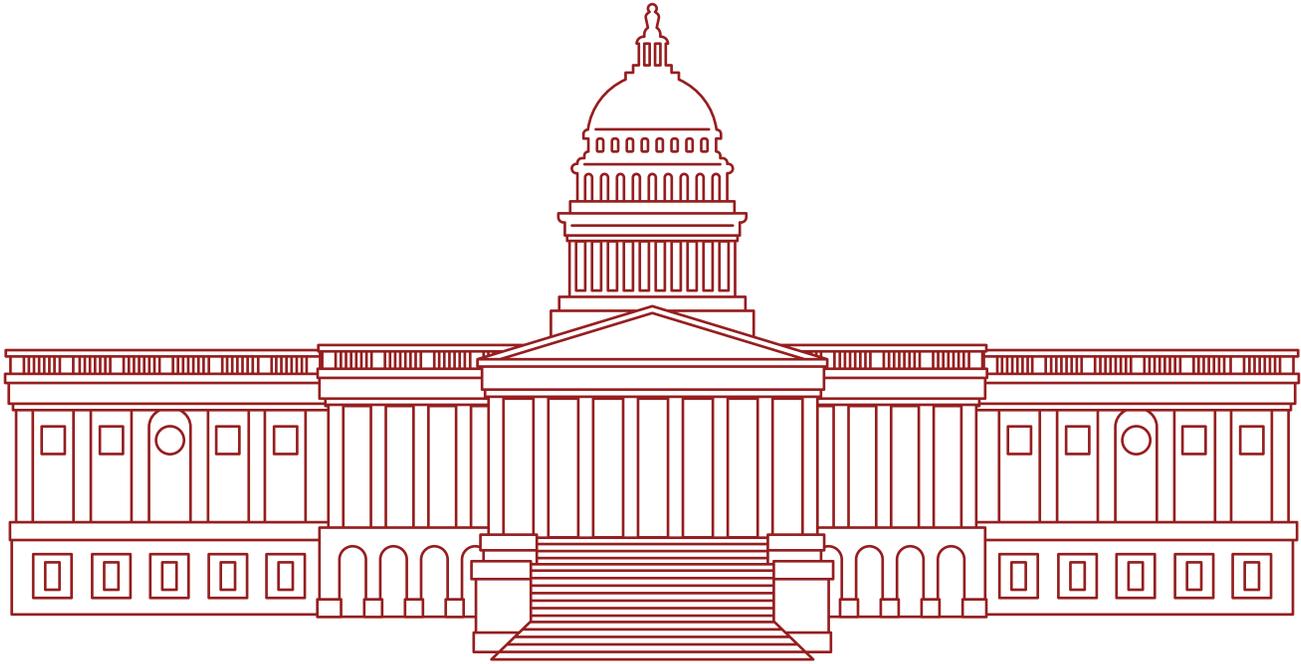
#### **~ Sean Gilbert, NAHRO President**

Thank you for representing your residents, agencies and communities in the nation's capital. In the middle of an unprecedented housing crisis, our voices matter more than ever – as constituents, as housing professionals and as people with lived experience with the challenges we are all trying to overcome. I wish you the best of luck with your meetings, and hope you will take advantage of this opportunity to speak up for your communities and strengthen relationships with the officials who represent you in Washington, D.C.

#### **~ Ivory Mathews, NAHRO Sr. Vice President**

NAHRO advocates, I am immeasurably grateful for your presence and your voice here. While NAHRO is your eyes, ears and messenger in the nation's capital, we can't do it without you. As housers and constituents, your voices carry weight, and the stories of your triumphs and challenges are a powerful way to emphasize the importance of your work. Help us – and your elected representatives – work together towards our shared dream of thriving communities with affordable homes for all.

#### **~ Mark Thiele, NAHRO CEO**



## What is Capitol Hill Day?

Capitol Hill Day is an annual opportunity for NAHRO membership to engage with members of Congress on Capitol Hill during the Washington Conference. As a leading association of affordable housing and community development professionals, NAHRO has a respected voice in Washington D.C. One of the most effective ways to use that voice to advocate for our policy priorities is through in-person meetings. By leveraging our national network of members, NAHRO can make our shared priorities real for legislators and their staff. When NAHRO raises its voice, D.C. listens, and that is in large part because of the work you are doing.

### **Why is it important to engage with members of Congress?**

Members of Congress prioritize constituent engagement. They want to hear from you! In addition to holding members of Congress accountable, constituents help Congressional offices stay on top of what is important in their communities. At NAHRO, we are uniquely positioned to leverage our collective voice to inform Congress on how affordable housing and community development programs are working locally and nationally, and to advocate for funding and program changes when necessary.

You do not have to be an expert on affordable housing or community development policy, nor do your members of Congress expect you to be. What is most important to them is hearing your perspective within our industry, the experiences of your residents, and action items that their office can realistically execute.

### **What if my member of Congress does not attend the Capitol Hill Day meeting?**

Members of Congress are sometimes unable to attend constituent meetings due to scheduling conflicts. When this happens, you will meet with staffers that cover housing for that office. It may feel disappointing to miss out on connecting face-to-face with your elected officials. However, staffers are critical to the work that gets done on the Hill and act on behalf of your member of Congress.





## Preparation for a Successful Office Visit

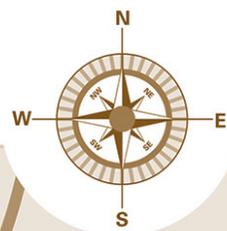
There is no “right” or “wrong” way to prepare for your office visit. Understanding a bit about logistics on the ground can help you get started:

### 1. Things to know about member offices and the U.S. Capitol campus:

- a. The House Office Buildings (HOB): Canon, Ford, Longworth, and Rayburn. The Senate Office Buildings (SOB): Hart, Russell, and Dirksen. There is a small train that operates between the Senate buildings and connects to the Longworth HOB. (See map on the following page.)
- b. You may enter House and Senate Office buildings freely upon passing a metal detector. It is a good practice to inform the office or your point of contact that you have arrived so they can prepare for your arrival and send a staffer to guide you if needed.
- c. Capitol Police are a great resource for finding your way around and they’re all very friendly especially to visitors. If you get lost or need directions they’re happy to help.
- d. Offices on Capitol Hill are typically very busy, and members have very limited time most days. In-person meetings may generally last between 15-30 minutes.
- e. Members and/or staff may also be late coming from another appointment, meeting, hearing, a vote, etc. Maximizing your time is critical and being flexible can go a long way.
- f. Congressional offices vary in size based on the seniority of the member. A freshman member office is generally smaller than that of a longstanding member. This is important to account for when determining the size of your group.
- g. Navigating Capitol Hill requires a lot of walking. You’ll probably see plenty of members of Congress walking to and from hearings, meetings, the floor, etc. Be prepared to “get your steps in!” Be sure to rest when you need to.
- h. If you require a wheelchair, please contact the office you’re visiting so that they can arrange that service for you.
- i. There are stairways and elevators in each of the House Office Buildings. Certain elevators are reserved for use by members of Congress and top-level staff, especially during votes.
- j. If you are staying at the Grand Hyatt (conference hotel), public transportation may be the most convenient transit option. The closest Metro to the Grand Hyatt is Metro Center. Three Metro stops are within walking distance of Capitol Hill:
  - Capitol South—Located at First Street between C and D Streets, SE (House Side)
  - Federal Center, SW—Located at the southwest corner of Third and D Streets, SW (House Side)
  - Union Station—Located at First Street, NW, and Massachusetts Avenue (Senate Side)
- k. NAHRO will also offer shuttle transportation to the Hill 8:00am – 12:00pm, halting service during the lunch hour, 12:00pm – 2:00pm. Attendees will still have to walk several blocks upon drop-off (especially to the Senate office buildings) as buses are only permitted to the perimeter of the Hill at Garfield Circle (First Street and Maryland Avenue, SW) for security reasons. Return shuttle trips will run 2:00pm – 6:00pm. Meet the return shuttle at Peace Circle (First Street and Pennsylvania Avenue).
- l. For those with mobility challenges, cabs or rideshares (Uber, Lyft, etc.) can drop passengers directly at all House and Senate office buildings.

# U.S. CAPITOL

Visitor Center



**U.S. Capitol Campus Accessible Routes**

**Legend**

- Accessible Entrance
- Bus Pick-Up and Drop-Off
- Accessible Route
- Accessible Pick-Up and Drop-Off
- Capitol Visitor Center Shuttle Route
- Parking
- Bus Pick-Up and Drop-Off
- Metro Station
- Elevators



For more information on Captiol Hill accessibility services, visit:  
[www.aoc.gov/explore-capitol-campus/visitor-resources/accessibility-services](http://www.aoc.gov/explore-capitol-campus/visitor-resources/accessibility-services)



## 2. Researching The Member:

- a. Every member of Congress has a website that contains personal biographies, a map of their district, policy stances, archived press releases and more. This background information can be helpful when formulating questions.
- b. Referencing parts of a member's biography, especially a shared connection you may have, shows that you have done your research and can help establish an anchor point to connect as people and not solely as advocate to policy maker. You could share a common school, military service, neighborhood, etc. Establishing a personal connection can be invaluable to growing and maintaining a long-term partnership.
- c. Learn more about the members' committee assignments and work they've done in those areas that may have a tie-in to your own work or to affordable housing more broadly.



## 3. Crafting Your Message:

- a. Member offices meet with constituents all the time. They expect your message to be reasonable, organized, and most importantly clear. Planning out your talking points with your group in advance is important to maximize the limited time you will have with the office.
- b. An effective and memorable way to organize your message is to allow different members from your group to articulate the part(s) of the message that most closely relate to their lived experience/expertise.
- c. Your requests should be specific and within the power of the office you're in. Asking a member office to support specific legislation is reasonable. Asking a member office to fix the affordable housing crisis is not.
- d. What you are saying needs to be supported by up-to-date and accurate information that you can share with the office. Members and staff have a lot to deal with already, making the information tied to your advocacy as accessible as possible is key to seeing meaningful action later. Providing the member or staff NAHRO's Policy Priorities and Legislative and Regulatory Agenda can help make sure everyone remembers the key points raised in your meeting.
- e. Know the status of the legislation or issue(s) you're advocating for. Refer to a bill by its bill number when appropriate, or at least have this information available because they will likely ask.



#### 4. Considering Your Team:

- a. When planning with your group for a Hill visit, it is important to have a diversity of voices on the issue at hand. Providing multiple vantage points of the same issue makes the issue multi-dimensional and illustrates its importance.
- b. Plan out who will lead the meeting and who will cover which talking points so there is no uncertainty or overlapping speakers.
- c. Congressional staff meet with many groups during a legislative session. Your Capitol Hill Day will more than likely take place while the office is “in session” meaning a busy office will be juggling meetings, sometimes at competing times. This is why your group’s flexibility is important. Be prepared to meet in the office, in the hallway, a nearby cafeteria, outside of the office building, etc. Flexibility will be appreciated and remembered by staffers and will help build a long-term partnership with them.



#### 5. Your Visit:

- a. Like any first meeting, you’ll need to introduce yourself. If you are the designated leader of your group, you’ll want to prepare a brief introduction of yourself, your group, and your reason for being there. Do not take it upon yourself to speak entirely for the group or talk over members of your group.
- b. From there, each member of your group should introduce themselves and where they’re from and share a brief connection to the member’s district/constituency (i.e. from the district, work in the district, went to school in the district, heard the member speak somewhere, etc..)
- c. Starting with a positive note is ideal, you’re meeting with them in their office with a request. You could thank the member or thank the staffer for the member’s support on legislation related to the policy issue you’re there for.
- d. Do your best to make it through all the points of your message, but don’t be afraid to pause. Your meeting can be more conversational if you leave room for the member and their staff to ask questions and provide feedback.
- e. Don’t exaggerate or mislead. If you do not know something, you do not know something. Politely say that you’re unsure and that you will follow up. You can always follow up with the correct information after the meeting, which also creates an organic way to connect with the office on the issue after your visit.
- f. Members of Congress often appreciate opportunities to take a photo with their constituents. You can end the meeting on a positive note by thanking the member or staffer for their time and asking if the group could take a picture. (Remember, their time is limited so it is more common practice to take a group photo instead of individual pictures.)
- g. During and after your visit, be sure to provide easy to read literature, like NAHRO’s 2026 Policy Priorities, funding recommendations, state data flyer and other documents from your agency, to highlight important facts, figures, and arguments.

#### 6. Capitol Hill Day Follow Up:

- a. Always send a follow-up email thanking the member and staff for meeting with you. It is a small thing that can easily keep the conversation going and help to establish the longterm partnership between you and the staff.
- b. One of the most important things you can do following a visit is to provide any information or resources you promised to send after the meeting. Following up makes it more likely that your information will be disseminated to the member and relevant staff.
- c. If there are events in your area that may be relevant to the topics discussed at your meeting, invite the member and their appropriate staff. Even if they cannot attend, this is a good gesture that will be remembered and opens the line of communication for you to invite them to future events.
- d. Invite the member and staff to a site visit, and make sure to let NAHRO’s Legislative Affairs team know if they take you up on the invitation!

## NAHRO Leadership:

### **Sean Gilbert, PHM, SPHM, NCC, NAHRO Fellow**

NAHRO President  
Executive Director, Tennessee Valley Housing Services  
(Morristown, Tenn.)

### **Ivory Mathews**

NAHRO Senior Vice President  
Chief Executive Officer, Home Forward  
(Portland, Ore.)

### **Mark Thiele, CS-PHM, CME, CMVO, NCC**

NAHRO Chief Executive Officer

### **Yvonda Bean**

NAHRO Legislative Network Advisory Committee Chair  
Chief Executive Officer, Indianapolis Housing Agency  
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## About NAHRO:

NAHRO, established in 1933, is a membership organization of more than 26,000 housing and community development providers and professionals throughout the United States. NAHRO members create and manage affordable housing for low- and middle-income families and support vibrant communities that enhance the quality of life for all. They administer more than 3 million homes for more than 8 million people.



**National Association of Housing &  
Redevelopment Officials**

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