

Stop the Suits! Campaign Kickoff

National Week of Action: October 12-16

Action Objectives:

- 1. Organize an energetic, public kick-off to Stop the Suits! campaign.**
- 2. Actively pressure Pacific Rim and Commerce Group to drop their lawsuits.**
- 3. Cultivate media attention to spotlight our campaign and publicly embarrass Pacific Rim and Commerce Group.**
- 4. Raise community awareness and build community alliances and support for our Stop the Suits! campaign, clearly articulating the connections between CAFTA, mining and the lawsuits.**

There's already quite a bit of energy building around the Week of Action to Stop the Suits! Check out what radical CISPES activists are up to...

- *Monday, October 12: National Office and DC CISPES expose the failures of NAFTA and CAFTA with creative street theater*
- *Wednesday, October 14: Bay Area CISPES demonstration for Obama's visit to San Francisco, calling for real change to the flawed model of US trade policy.*
- *Friday, October 16: NW committees and Canadian partners demonstrate at Pacific Rim HQ in Vancouver, British Columbia*
- *Friday, October 16: CISPES allies protest at Commerce Group HQ in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.*
- *NY CISPES takes to the streets with dynamic street theater decrying NAFTA, CAFTA and the free trade model*

All CISPES committees can get in on the action! Even if your committee has not begun planning a protest, there are a variety of creative actions that you can organize to raise awareness about these heinous lawsuits and enlist support in the fight to stop these suits, from the general public, local coalition partners and Congressional allies. Here are some action and pressure ideas for your committee, with accompanying materials to jumpstart your committee organizing.

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Action Ideas

The October Week of Action is our big campaign kickoff, so let's get out there and make some waves! Here are a few ideas for solid, creative actions to mobilize and educate people to join us and Stop the Suits!

Street Theater...Street theater can be a fun and creative way to make a statement against the lawsuits and also tends to draw a crowd, people who can be asked to sign postcards or make calls.

Banner Drops... From a bridge or outside of a downtown office window, hang a large banner that says something like, "Pacific Rim: Stop Blackmailing El Salvador!"

Call-in Days...Ask people to call Pacific Rim and Commerce Group, at public events, tables or by phoning your supporter list! CISPES committees and allies are mounting simultaneous demonstrations at the headquarters of these mining corporations. Everyone across the country can give these corporate CEOs an earful while our *compas* raise hell outside their offices! (*See the sample phoning script is included in this packet*)

Creative Outreach & Action...Set up some large colorful signs or banners and a CISPES table or wear "Stop the Suits" sandwich boards and ask people you meet to take action against the mining lawsuits—by signing a postcard or making a call! Check out the creative slogans section for sign ideas!

Congressional Visits

The short-term goal of our new campaign is to fight and stop the CAFTA lawsuits filed by Pacific Rim and Commerce Group. However, our longer-term objective is to overturn CAFTA—the legal framework that enables these companies to sue the Salvadoran government for millions of dollars. Congress, which was the body that voted to approve CAFTA, has a key role in any attempt to renegotiate or repeal it and are also good targets for grassroots organizing because every committee can participate and our Representatives can be moved by pressure and public opinion. These lawsuits are a powerful way to re-introduce and impress upon our Congressional allies the startling dangers of CAFTA and the U.S. free trade model.

During the Week of Action or early this fall, all committees should set up meetings with their local Congressional representatives to discuss these lawsuits and the work that CISPES is doing to stop them, as our first step towards overturning CAFTA. Below are some objectives and asks for these visits.

Meeting Objectives:

1. Update Congress on the economic and political situation in El Salvador since the elections.
2. Enlist support among Congressional allies in the struggle against the Pacific Rim and Commerce Group lawsuits and CAFTA.
3. Consult with Representatives on the TRADE Act as an effective tool for renegotiating CAFTA and/or other legislative possibilities.

Congressional Asks:

1. Ask Representatives who are not co-sponsors of the TRADE Act, to co-sponsor the legislation. (*Go here for a list of Congressional co-sponsors: <http://www.citizen.org/trade/tradeact/>*)
2. If the Rep is already a co-sponsor of the TRADE Act, what kind of legislation can she envision or would be willing to introduce to remove private investor protections from NAFTA and CAFTA? (If the she is a very strong ally, what possible legislation would be an effective tool to renegotiate or repeal CAFTA?)

For more suggestions on how to conduct these visits and get the most out of them, see the newly updated “Grassroots Guide to Congressional Lobbying” at the end of this guide (Appendix 1).

Media Support for the Week of Action

It will be important to try to get press coverage of any major events that happen during your Week of Action. This could include a press event targeting one of the mining companies, delivery of petitions to your member of congress, or demonstrations/actions taken to raise awareness about mining and CAFTA. Below are some tips provided by organizations with some experience in this area. As always, these tips should be amended to suit local reality and any already existing relationships your coalition may have with the press.

How to Deliver a Message in the Media

[Adapted from the Western Organization of Resource Councils (www.worc.org)]

Citizens’ groups need newspaper, TV and radio coverage of their stories to be effective. A story at the top of the evening news or on the front page boosts morale and can help a group win on an issue its members care about. A negative story or a hostile editorial can undermine a campaign.

Why do you want media coverage?

Before you spend a lot of your organization’s time and resources on a major media campaign, stop and think about why you want media coverage. You want:

- ★ The public to know arguments and facts that support your position on an issue.
- ★ People to hear about and join your group.
- ★ To pressure the governor, a company or some other decision-maker to act.
- ★ To publicize upcoming events or a fundraiser.

There are also stories you don’t want in the news:

- ★ Stories on an issue on which your group has no position or is divided.
- ★ Stories about conflicts within your group.
- ★ Stories about your losses.
- ★ You may not want stories about your internal strategy discussions.
- ★ You may not want stories about sensitive negotiations with your opponents.

Media coverage is one tool, a part of your strategy to win on issues and build your group. It is not an end in itself. Citizens’ groups have fewer resources for public relations campaigns than do many of their corporate and government opponents. If you focus only on media coverage, and neglect the other parts of running good issue campaigns and maintaining a strong organization,

you're bound to lose in the end.

Who is the media?

Many citizens' groups spend most of their time and effort to get reporters to cover their stories in their local daily newspaper. Stories in the daily paper will be read by a lot of people in your town, probably including most opinion-makers and decision-makers, and your members.

Newspaper clippings are useful to send out in mailings to donors and members to reinforce good feelings about your group. Some other places to get your message into the daily paper are read just as much, or more, than the front page: editorials, opinion columns, and letters to the editor are obvious examples, but don't forget calendars, the business page, photos and cartoons. The daily paper is not the only source of print news. In many places, people read weekly papers, usually run by overworked people looking for good material to fill space.

Ways to deliver your message in the media

- ★ Hold a press conference or a media event.
- ★ Radio talk shows: members call in, or field calls as guests.
- ★ Write letters to the editor.
- ★ Meet with editorial boards, request a supporting editorial.
- ★ Submit guest editorials (long letter to the editor, with pictures).
- ★ Ask reporters to attend and cover a meeting, event or action.
- ★ Call newspapers, TV or radio and offer to be interviewed.
- ★ Provide background information, sources to a reporter (give them an exclusive).
- ★ Cultivate a reporter's interest in a feature story: a "human interest" piece, or more in-depth analysis of an interesting issue.
- ★ Prepare newsworthy quotes or sound bites to deliver at a public meeting, hearing or event organized by someone else.
- ★ Prepare a spokesperson for special TV or radio news programs.

Specialty publications are important to the work of any citizens' group. For example, farmers and ranchers get a lot of their news from regional and national agricultural trade publications as do farm and ranch reporters from daily newspapers. Many government regulators, business people and activists read publications like Coal Week or Inside EPA. There is less news on the radio today than 10 or 20 years ago, but there are still a lot of opportunities to get your message on the airwaves. Noncommercial (public) radio is supported in part by state and federal funds, and has an obligation to provide news coverage. Much of the in-depth reporting is found on National Public Radio programs, but most public stations have some kind of local and regional coverage. The public radio audience is fairly small, but it includes decision-makers, the well educated and the affluent (so it's important if that's who you want to reach). Many commercial radio stations today have just five minutes of news every couple of hours, if they have any at all, but other stations have all news-and talk formats. Radio talk shows are an important medium for citizens' groups. Local and regional shows need interesting guests and interesting topics. If you can't get your spokesperson on a radio talk show, members can call in with comments or questions.

Citizens groups can get Public Service Announcements (PSA's), free broadcast of a recorded or written message on most commercial stations, especially if they concern an upcoming event, or an uncontroversial message. If you can't get free air time, radio is a relatively inexpensive place to buy advertising compared to TV. TV time is expensive because so many people are tuned in. We may think TV news is superficial, or complain about how hard it is to get on TV news, but

two-thirds of the news people get is through TV and radio (mostly TV).

A typical nightly news-cast has twelve minutes of news. After sports, weather, and advertising is accounted for, there is time for at most a dozen stories. But if you need to reach the general public, you need to get on TV. There are opportunities besides the nightly news, although the audiences will be smaller: interviews on the noon news, special news talk shows, TV PSA's, and community service announcements. There are opportunities on public TV, as well. And most cable systems have local access channels, which give your group an opportunity to have its own show.

Today, millions of people get all kinds of information through the Internet and the World Wide Web. The potential is huge, but a couple of cautionary notes: it's almost impossible to make sure that any of the potential viewers, who are all over the world, will see the message you put out. If you need to reach people without computers and modems, the Internet isn't much help.

To get your message covered by the media, your strategy must be based on an understanding of whatever media sources you are targeting. Spend time reading papers and magazines, listening to the radio stations and watching the TV shows you want to cover your story. What are the 10 formats of the stories they run? What kinds of stories do they run? Who owns the media outlets in your community? Who are the reporters? If you can answer these questions, and build relationships with the people who report and package the news, you are ready to develop your strategy for getting heard in the media.

Newspapers, radio and TV stations are businesses. Reporters, editors, and news directors are all as busy as you are. They may get hundreds of press releases in a day. A good media strategy makes it easy for them to run your story, by providing credible, clear, newsworthy and professional material.

Planning a media strategy

The first step in developing a plan to work with the media is to be clear about your objectives.

What is it you want? What is the goal of your issue campaign or your membership drive? Once that is clear, there are four basic parts to any sound media strategy: developing your message, defining your audience, deciding who will deliver your message, and deciding how they will deliver your message.

The message: Given your goal, what is the message you want to send? Do you want people to understand more about the problem your group is concerned about? Do you want them to understand what you want done about it? Do you want to undermine your opponent's credibility? Do you want people to support your position by signing a petition, making a call or signing a letter?

The audience: Who needs to see your message to make your campaign successful? We often assume we need to reach the general public, but that's not always true. It takes a lot more time and resources to send a message to everyone (even everyone in your state) than to send a message to farmers in your state, or legislators, or the Director of the State Highway Department. If you do want to send a message to the general public, is it everyone in the U.S., or in your state, or in your town? The better you can target your audience, the easier and more effective your media strategy will be.

The messenger & the medium: You have your message and audience; now you need to decide

who will deliver it, and how. Who will be your most effective spokesperson? Most citizens groups rely on their president or chairperson, or the head of a committee, to represent their group, because they have the most credibility with the audience and reporters.

You should also think about who is the most interesting spokesperson. If your message is about cleaning up air pollution, someone with health problems caused by poor air quality is a more interesting spokesperson. Hold a press conference above the town looking down on a hazy view, or in front of a medical facility that treats respiratory illnesses.

If you want to let lots of people know about several arguments and facts that support your position, the most effective strategy may be to get several members to write letters to the editor or call in on radio talk shows. Letters to the editor are among the most widely-read words in a newspaper, and more likely to reach your audience than half-a-dozen press releases.

Press releases should be attractively designed and professionally prepared, because reporters will have to pick it out from dozens of others. Think and write as much like a reporter as you can. Write in the third person; express opinions by quoting a spokesperson.

Keep it short. Double-space it. The most important part of a good press release is the follow-up. Call the reporter, find out if they got the press release, and ask them if they need any other information. Make sure they understand what you think is newsworthy about your story.

Ten tips to getting your story covered

- Know the reporters.
- Know the media.
- Know your message & audience.
- Prepare with person who will deliver it.
- Make it easy for the reporter.
- Know what's newsworthy.
- Keep it simple; explain the story.
- Find the angle: pocketbook, etc.
- Be persistent.
- Make media strategy part of your campaign.

A follow-up call will help you even if the reporter doesn't cover your story, because you can usually find out why. If the reporter says he can't use your release, don't hang up in a huff. Ask what would make it more interesting and newsworthy.

TAKE ACTION WITH CISPES TODAY!
Tell Pacific Rim to Drop the \$77 Million Lawsuit Against El Salvador!

In the department of Cabañas, El Salvador, communities have been protesting against a proposed gold mining project by Pacific Rim, a Canadian mining company. Their concern? That **cyanide used to extract gold would poison El Salvador's largest river**, the primary source of drinking water for millions in the country. Their protests were strong enough to shut down the El Dorado gold mining site. In 2007, the Ministry of Environment denied Pacific Rim's permit to start drilling for gold.

But Pacific Rim is not listening. Instead, they are **suing the Salvadoran government for \$77 million**, which they claim as "lost profit". How can they do this?! The U.S. Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) **protects the "rights" of corporations over national laws** that safeguard workers and the environment. Chapter 10 of CAFTA gives private foreign investors the "right" to sue for "profit infringement" and extort millions of dollars from governments like El Salvador.

Since the U.S. Congress voted to approve CAFTA in 2005—by a mere two votes—the **cross-border resistance** has continued. The Salvadoran people have successfully mobilized to block the privatization of health care and water and other implementation of this "free" trade agreement.

But **death squad violence in El Salvador has resurfaced** since the passing of CAFTA, specifically targeting trade unionists, resource rights activists and members of the left political party, the FMLN (Farabundo Martí Front for National Liberation). In June 2009, the anti-mining struggle turned deadly when outspoken **community leader Marcelo Rivera was tortured and killed**. The right-wing Attorney General has refused to investigate this as a political assassination, or to investigate numerous death threats, kidnapping and assassination attempts in Cabañas.

Pacific Rim's lawsuit could devastate El Salvador's economy, taking state funds out of necessary social programs like farming, health care and education and putting it in the pockets of corporate shareholders in North America. **Call CEO Thomas Shrake and demand that Pacific Rim withdraw its lawsuit and respect the will of the Salvadoran people by closing the mines!**

CALL Pacific Rim Headquarters today--from the U.S. 1- (888) 775-7097 or from Canada (604) 689-1976--and leave a message with the corporate secretary (*see call script on back of page*). You can also email Pacific Rim directly: general@pacrim-mining.com.

To learn more about CAFTA, the mining lawsuits and how you can join the struggle, contact us!
CISPES: Committee In Solidarity with the People of El Salvador
www.cispes.org ★ (202) 521-2510 ★ 1525 Newton St NW, Washington DC, 20010

Use the following script to contact Thomas Shrake, CEO and President of Pacific Rim:

To call from the U.S. dial 1- (888) 775-7097, or from Canada (604) 689-1976, then leave a message for the corporate secretary:

1. Hello, I am calling to urge President and CEO Thomas Shrake and the Board of Pacific Rim, to drop the lawsuit you filed against the government of El Salvador. Local and national civic organizations have been actively opposing the El Dorado mine since 2004. Salvadoran environmentalists, economists and social movement leaders have roundly rejected the mine, and now this outrageous lawsuit, on a number of grounds.

2. Choose 1 or 2 of the following points.

- **Environmental:** Salvadoran community activists and environmental organizations have consistently denounced the devastating environmental impacts that would result from the El Dorado mine. The mine would contaminate the river that serves as the primary source of drinking water for the majority of Salvadorans and use over 10,000 gallons of water a day. All this in a country where 30% of the rural population lacks access to potable water.
- **Trade justice:** The Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), the basis for Pacific Rim's lawsuit, was widely opposed throughout the U.S. and Central America. Citizen advocacy groups in El Salvador charge that CAFTA is unconstitutional and have brought the case before their Supreme Court. As CAFTA's legitimacy itself is in question, Pacific Rim's lawsuit appears even more bogus.
- **Economic:** According to economic experts, the mine provides no long-term economic benefit for El Salvador, only for Pacific Rim. The gold mining industry contributes only 0.04% to El Salvador's GDP while foreign companies like Pacific Rim plan to take away millions in profit.
- **Human rights:** I have heard first-hand accounts of horrible political violence against community members in Cabañas who have actively opposed the El Dorado mine. Even if Pacific Rim did not directly instigate this violence, the murder of Marcelo Rivera, and the attempted assassinations of Father Luis Quintanilla and Ramiro Rivera are undoubtedly a result of Pacific Rim's presence. The fact that people are risking their lives to fight against El Dorado shows just how unwelcome gold mines are and how disgraceful this lawsuit is.
- **Sovereignty:** This lawsuit infringes upon the rights of sovereign governments to protect the interests of their people as they see fit. Each country has the right to determine how its land is used, as well as the fate of its natural resources. Your lawsuit tramples on those rights.

3. It is shameful that Mr. Shrake is willing to wreak profound economic damage on an entire nation for the financial gain of his company. These lawsuits will hit the poorest people in El Salvador the hardest. If Mr. Shrake has his way, much-needed funding for social programs like health care, food and housing will go directly into the pockets of your shareholders.

For these reasons, I again urge you to withdraw the disgraceful lawsuit that Pacific Rim has filed against El Salvador.

Slogans & Chants

LAWSUITS & MINING

El Salvador wants sovereignty, not more poverty!

You say "lost profits", we say extortion!
You say "investor protections", we say blackmail!
You say "free trade", we say corporate shake down!

Get your damn,
Bloody hands,
Off their lands!

Your lawsuit is a crime!
You won't get a dime!

El Salvador will not be sold,
get your hands off their gold!

1,2,3,4 No no lawsuit, no no more!
5,6,7,8 Drop the suit, it's not too late!

Pacific Rim take heed,
We will fight your corporate greed!

Shame on you, get off it!
This lawsuit is for profit!

NAFTA/CAFTA/FREE TRADE

NAFTA, CAFTA, Why do we HAFTA?

CAFTA means hunger, CAFTA means violence
We know the truth and we won't be silenced!

Stop the War, Stop the War Against the Poor! (say what?)
Stop the War, Stop the War Against the Poor!

Call and response:

Call: Creating more poverty, Do we HAFTA?

Response: No, no, no! We don't want your CAFTA!

Other Calls:

Privatizing water, Do we HAFTA.....

Destroying small farmers.....

Destroying small businesses.....

Even more sweatshops.....

More union busting.....

Less biodiversity.....

More expensive medicines....

More corporate welfare.....

No more sovereignty.....

Loss of local control.....

More migration.....

More rural poverty.....

Corporate domination.....

Poorer women.....

Privatizing healthcare.....

Privatizing education.....

Privatizing telephones.....

More deaths on the border.....

TLC es exactamente como yo sabía
Solo beneficia la oligarquía

TLC es exactamente como yo sabía
Nos va a joder la mayoría

No queremos y no nos da la gana, ser una colonia norteamericana
Pero si queremos, y si nos la da gana ser Centroamerica libre y soberana!

CISPES Guide To Grassroots Congressional Pressure

Updated Sept. 2009

1. Differing Levels and Forms of Congressional Pressure

Congressional pressure plays a critical role in whether or not we defeat policies like CAFTA and the ILEA, not to mention other laws that affect Latin America. After all, Congress is the body legally charged with approving trade deals. According to the Constitution, our Congressional representatives in the House and the Senate exist to represent the views and best interests of their constituents (those who live in their district or state). Unfortunately, our representatives are often more greatly influenced by large corporations and monied interest groups than they are by their constituents or they are simply uninformed or uninterested. Sometimes, all that is needed to convince a Representative to take a stand is to ask (or subtly demand) that s/he do so; at other times we must force him/her to do so through grassroots political pressure. Even if your representative has regularly voted against free trade agreements – or sided with us on other issues – it is still vital to maintain political pressure. Congressional representatives can change their minds between the time of your meeting and the day of the vote. Witness the CAFTA vote in 2005 the Republicans did not have enough votes to push through CAFTA until they twisted enough arms and "convinced" enough legislators to change their vote. By maintaining adequate political pressure we send our representatives a clear message: your constituents do not want free trade and militarization and there is no room for a change of heart.

There are many different ways, with varying levels of militancy, to express to our Representatives our opposition to policies like CAFTA, the ILEA, and other forms of US intervention and to pressure them to vote the right way! Among the most widely used tactics are:

- Writing letters/emails/postcards
- Phone calls
- Congressional visits
- Hounding/Bird-dogging
- Protests and demonstrations
- Office sit-ins

All of these tactics can be carried out in a diverse number of ways, all with varying levels of confrontation. Which tactics you use to carry out your strategy will depend on the conditions particular to your locale.

The keys to a successful congressional pressure campaign are:

1. Building mobilizing capacity
2. Escalation of pressure
3. Diversity of tactics

Because the policies we seek to change are integral to the US neoliberal model, many Representatives will vote against these measures only when forced. Representatives must believe that if they do not do so their constituency will not vote for them in the future. This means that we must mobilize as many people as possible to pressure Congress, under the threat that if our representatives do not heed the call they will lose their jobs. To this end, we must ensure that even while escalating our actions that we continue to reach out to and recruit new

activists. Optimally, the actions we carry out should have the objective not simply to mobilize but to educate and reach out to the public.

The need to build mobilizing capacity is one of the big reasons to increase escalation over time instead of starting off with the highest level of militancy. If we started a pressure campaign using the highest level of militancy, such as an office take over, we would be hard pressed to find a means to increase our militancy in the future while expanding our base.

However, simply because we do not want to start with the highest level of militancy when launching a campaign does not mean that escalation of pressure must be a long and drawn out process. Depending on the local conditions, it is very possible to climb the pressure ladder quickly. It is also possible and suggested that campaigns employ more than one type of tactic in the same conjuncture. Escalation of pressure does not have to mean that a campaign starts off with letter writing and THEN move on to phone calls and only THEN move on to congressional visits, etc. Rather, campaigns can easily start with letter writing and phone calls and combine with congressional visits, etc.

2. Congressional Visit How-To

A. Advanced Preparation

Do Your Research, Compile important facts and figures.

- Research in the Congressional Directory (www.congress.org, www.house.gov, www.senate.gov). Just punch in your zip code, and the site provides you with contact information and a web page for your Member of Congress. You will be able to find biographical information, committee and subcommittee assignments, and key issues of concern for your Representative.
- Certain policy groups have good information beyond what CISPES has put out, so check those.
- Review your legislator's voting record and any publicly stated views or opinions.
- Learn who does staff work on the issues that concern you most. These are the people who answer your letters and brief/advise their boss on pending issues. These people are a very important resource but are often overlooked.
- All legislators supposedly want to improve the economy and quality of life in their district/state and have a positive international impact. Search for information on the impact of free trade agreements, military bases and the SOA, or whatever you're are lobbying about.

Make sure everyone in your group is prepared.

- Brief everyone attending the meeting and provide them with written materials.
- Be organized. If you are part of a group, it is a good idea to organize a preparatory meeting beforehand. Decide who will discuss what and in what order participants will speak.
- Be certain everyone agrees on the central message and what will be asked of the legislator. This way you will avoid a possible internal debate in front of your legislator.
- Know the counter-arguments. Be ready to respectfully answer any questions or disagreements. However, we must keep in mind the purpose of the visit, to express our opposition to the policy in question, not to have a debate. Be careful not to get so caught up in the details that the overall message gets lost.

- Prepare an information packet to leave with your legislator. This should include information on the topic and on CISPES (i.e. brochures, outreach materials, political pressure materials, info sheets, etc.)

B. Getting the Meeting

You can meet with your Legislators either in their local office or in their Washington DC office.

1. Contacting your legislator:

- Send a fax to your Representative requesting a meeting
- Call to follow up on you fax and ask for a specific time. When you call your legislator's office ask to speak with the person who handles the legislator's schedule.
- Keep in mind that each congressional office schedules appointments differently, but the legislator's scheduler or appointment secretary usually arranges appointments.

2. Making the Appointment:

- When speaking to the scheduler, introduce yourself and explain that you are a constituent.
- Tell the scheduler the date and time you would like to meet with your legislator (be flexible) and the general topics you wish to discuss.
- Let the scheduler know that the meeting should take no longer than one hour.
- If there is more than one person attending the meeting, let the scheduler know their names and affiliations.
- If someone in your group knows the legislator personally or professionally, make sure that the scheduler is aware of the relationship.
- Getting a meeting can sometimes be a long and arduous process with staffers giving you the run-around. Be persistent yet polite, and make it clear that YOU, the member's constituent, are the most important person s/he will ever listen to. Don't give up even if you are told the member has no time to meet with your delegation and even if they don't return your phone calls-it does pay off in the long run and in most cases you will eventually be able to sit down with your representative.
- Emphasize why the issues you are presenting are important to you as constituents and why they should be important to your Congressperson.
- If your Member can't meet with you, visit the staff member who works on the issues that most concern you. For most issues relating to El Salvador and trade policy, you will want to meet with the foreign policy and trade staffers. Usually that person will be based in Washington DC, but there will also be an aide in the local office who can meet with you. Try to meet with the highest ranking aide possible in the local office, i.e. the Legislative Director.
- After you schedule a meeting, send a confirmation letter that includes a list of those who will attend the meeting.

(a) Visits at the Local Office

- Seek appointments during congressional recess periods (around every holiday) when your Representative returns to your district.
- the telephone number and address of your legislator's district office can be found on their webpage, which you can find at <http://www.house.gov/> or <http://www.senate.gov/>

(b) Visits in Washington DC

- You can often make plans to visit the Washington office through the local office. Otherwise, contact the DC office, find out who the scheduler is, and ask them to arrange a meeting.
- Remember that most legislative business occurs Tuesday through Thursday and that the closing days of a session are extra busy.
- When you arrive in Washington, call the Representative's office to confirm your appointment.

C. Meeting with Your Representative

1. Be on time!
2. Introduce yourself and say what issues and legislation you want to discuss.
3. Always begin your meeting by thanking your legislator for taking the time to visit with you. If your legislator has been supportive of our stance around trade and social and economic justice, you should thank him/her for his/her support as well.
4. Explain to your legislator who you represent and why you asked for the meeting. If you are in a group, you should individually introduce yourself and briefly describe your organization.
5. Have different people cover different issues so that the Member can see the breadth of the coalition, but make sure that all introductions are kept brief allowing more time for conversation w/ the Representative.
6. Ask his or her position. How will s/he vote?
7. Remember that you might be talking to someone who has yet to hear of the issue. Be prepared to explain a little something to them and ask if he or she would like more information.
8. Do party leaders have positions on the issue? What is their influence likely to be?
9. Listen well -- you will hear occasional indications of your Representative's actual views, and you should take those opportunities to provide good information.
10. Be prepared but do not feel that you need to be an expert. Most members of Congress are generalists. Be open to counter-arguments, but don't get stuck on them. If you don't know the answer to a question, say so. Nothing is worse than being caught in a lie or inaccuracy. Offer to look into the question and get back to the Member (this is also an excellent opportunity to stay in touch).
11. Is the office hearing from opponents? If so, what are their arguments and what groups are involved?
12. Does the Representative know any other key House Members or Senators who should be contacted to get favorable action on the bill? Is s/he willing to facilitate contact?
13. Follow up -- you should consider sending a thank you note after the meeting, and if commitments were made during the meeting, repeat your understanding of them.

D. Strategy Tips

Always ask for specific actions; always get a specific commitment and then follow up.

Ask for Something More-- No matter how supportive or unsupportive your legislator is, there is always a next step. If your member is generally unresponsive, ask him or her to sign a letter on human rights. If your member is very responsive, ask him or her to initiate a "Dear Colleague" letter, etc.

Provide Affirmation Where Possible-- Look for areas of agreement and affirm them. Convey your appreciation for positive steps, no matter how small. Keep written records of meetings. Take notes for use in future contacts. What did you request? What was the response? What was promised? What are the chief areas of interest?

For more information about other Congressional pressure strategies, contact the CISPES national office or your local committee.

Further resources to check out: http://www.lawg.org/tools/contacting_congress.htm