



Ask a Question of Your Member of Congress in a Town Hall Meeting

When members of Congress are home in their districts, they often hold town hall meetings or forums to gather input from their constituents. These local gatherings provide a great opportunity to voice concerns, questions, and demands regarding the [Trans-Pacific Partnership](#) (TPP), [Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership](#) (TTIP), and [fast-track legislation](#).

By asking effective questions at town hall meetings, you can raise awareness of the TPP, TTIP, and fast track, and push them onto your legislator's agenda. Below are some tips to help you make the most of your town hall meeting.

A. How to find a town hall meeting

You can learn about upcoming constituent events (e.g., town hall meetings, breakfast events, candidate forums) by visiting the websites of your members of Congress. If you cannot find anything online, call the local district offices and ask about future town hall meetings. Oftentimes, you can receive event notifications by asking to be placed on the representative's emailing list.

And finally, looking at the Congressional calendar or legislative schedules on the websites of the [Senate](#) and [House](#) will tell you when your member of Congress will be back home in your district. Many members of Congress spend much of August and early September in their home states, in addition to other weeks throughout the year.

B. What to expect at a meeting or forum

Because legislators will typically arrive early to speak with constituents one-on-one, it's a good idea to get to the event as early as possible. You can also use this time to sign up to ask a question during the 'questions and answers' portion of the meeting. Don't be nervous about speaking up! The reason that legislators hold town hall meetings is that they want to hear your opinions and thoughts.

Town hall meetings generally begin with the member giving a speech or set of informal remarks. A question and answer session then follows. Afterwards, the legislator will typically remain for a while longer to speak individually with constituents. You may want to bring some factsheets or other materials (which you can find on our [website](#)), in case you get the chance to pass them on to your legislator or his/her staff.

C. Asking your question

Prepare your question in advance. Try to keep your questions succinct and to the point; direct questions that require yes or no answers are ideal. Personalized questions that tie into your life or

the lives of your community members are particularly powerful and memorable. To get you started thinking about your question, here are some sample questions that you could ask:

- Congressman/Congresswoman/Senator: I want to express my deep concern over fast-track legislation, or Trade Promotion Authority. I believe that Congress must maintain its ability to effectively oversee trade negotiations and ensure the contents of our trade agreements promote the public interest. Particularly for trade agreements as expansive as the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, I believe fast track must be opposed. Will you commit to opposing fast track?
- Congressman/Congresswoman/Senator: For too long our trade agreements have given broad rights to foreign corporations that allow them to challenge countries' domestic laws and policies in private tribunals. Increasingly, corporations have challenged environmental and other public interest policies. These investment rules, which are being replicated in the TPP and are being proposed for the TTIP, subvert our democracy, undermine domestic lawmaking, and expand the power of corporations at the expense of the people and the planet. Will you commit to vote 'no' to any trade agreement that allows corporations to attack U.S. laws and policies in private tribunals?
- Congressman/Congresswoman/Senator: The Trans-Pacific Partnership Free Trade Agreement has been under negotiation for years and is at the final stage of completion. Despite the far reaching implications of this agreement on the environment and the economy, not a single bit of draft text—not even U.S. proposals—have been made public. I am deeply troubled by the lack of transparency that has surrounded this agreement. Will you call on the U.S. Trade Representative to release the text of the TPP and tell the American public what they've been proposing in our names?
- Congressman/Congresswoman/Senator: The Trans-Pacific Partnership Free Trade Agreement and Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership would both pave the way for more fracking across the United States by requiring that the U.S. automatically approve natural gas export licenses to TPP and TTIP countries with no review or assessment of the environmental or economic implications. I will not support a trade agreement that expands fracking in my communities. Will you commit to opposing any trade pact that would lock in the U.S. into automatic exports of natural gas?

When you are called to ask your question, you may want to:

- Stand up and state your name and town of residence;
- Thank the legislator for holding the town hall meeting;
- Ask your question; and
- Thank the member for answering your question.

Please take notes on the Congressperson's response, and email his/her answers to Courtenay.Lewis@sierraclub.org

D. Follow-up

Since the legislator will typically stay around after the meeting, try to follow up on your question with either the member or his/her staff. You can also use this time to ask your question if you were unable to ask it during the question and answer session, and give some materials to the member or his/her staff. Try to get a business card from the staff so you can continue to be in touch.

To keep the TPP, TTIP and fast track on the legislator's radar, send an email to the legislator in the days following the town hall meeting. In the email, mention that you attended the town hall meeting and reiterate the questions/concerns/requests that you made. Ultimately, persistence is our greatest tool for influencing the decisions of our legislators!