From Linda Waycie, Southminster Presbyterian Church, Arlington Hts.

The day in Springfield goes like this:

A nice coach bus comes to the Northwest Suburbs to pick up people. Coffee and donuts are provided. We are trained on the bus. We go over all the bills we are to present to the congressmen and women. There is a team captain for groups of 4-5 people. We get in our groups. The team captain has the names of all the Senators and Representatives that we are to make contact with. The captain makes call to the congress people on the list and tries to make appointments with these people. Most of the time they are not in their office so we have to see them between meetings, in the halls and in the senate or rep. chambers.

We practice to be able to tell about the bill in short period of time- a few descriptive sentences.

We arrive in Springfield. We get off the bus, gather in our groups with our captain and start making our way to the congressmen and women’s offices. We leave info and try and find out where to meet them.

Lunch is provided. We go to the lunchroom to eat sandwiches. Then we go back out to the capital and try and see a few more people. We meet in the rotunda, have a rally, go outside for a group picture and go home.

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Further Information from Vince Unger, Countryside Church UU

I've done this half a dozen times with CRS, and other sponsors (and a few times on my own), including a very productive and encouraging one this Tuesday. It is a very collegial event. Only things I would add purely from my perspective are:

Catch while catch you can. Maybe on elevator - or walk to committee meeting.

Don't hesitate asking anyone where your contacts might be or how to get there (Capitol complex is huge, and impressive). In my experience staff, lobbyists, officials have all been friendly.

Remember this is also YOUR House.

Security is not as tight as courts or airport. You don't need to remove belts, watches, shoes.

As Linda mentioned you can sometimes pull your contacts (you are provided photos in case you don't know them by face) out of session, but not caucuses or committee meetings. It's simple, it's called ‘calling them at the rail,’ the third floor entrance to each chamber that overlooks the Rotunda where rallies are often held. You hand a simple card to the staffer.
If possible, call your contacts to setup appointment in their office. Senators are in Capitol, Reps in Stratford building, accessible by pedway. That's no guarantee of course, their days are hectic because they meet generally only three days a week, and only select weeks a year. You can pick up pending legislation at desks (there's a lot at any time), and even watch the "three readings" on monitors or live at the "gallery". Photos and videos are allowed. If you have already met your contacts or between appts. If your first time I'd suggest staying with your leader, the complex is overwhelming at first. Your leader is your guide, they have experience and report back results. You do whatever you are comfortable with...you are part of a team.

Don't get discouraged if you can't meet everyone or some are undecided or firm no's. Our presence counts. With so many bills pending and lobbyists roaming the place it helps bring important issues of constituents themselves to their attention, and we provide one-page fact sheets.

Wear walking shoes.

Training and role playing are excellent, buses are comfortable, all is very well prepared. I've gone too long, just wanted to share my enthusiasm for this process as it makes our role as engaged citizens less foreboding and CRS is a great and respected facilitator.