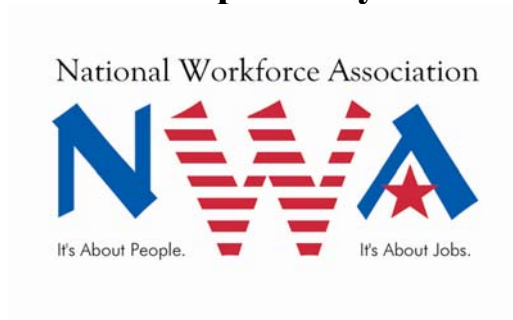


Guide For Congressional Visits to One Stop Centers For National One Stop Day

During the Week of May 24-31

Prepared by



In Partnership with
New York Association of Training and
Employment Professionals, Inc.

In Collaboration with
The Local Coalition



Guide for Congressional Visits to One Stops

There are many challenges facing workforce investment in the upcoming year with reauthorization and financial crisis looming. One of the biggest is establishing the workforce investment system's identity and value with our congressional leaders. We believe the best ways to do this is to have Congressional Members visit your local One Stop Centers. There is a tremendous impact when a member can see for himself or herself the wonderful service a One Stop provides to the citizens and businesses in their community.

A good time to hold these visits is during the Congressional Memorial Recess, May 24-31, 2004, when the members are back in their districts. The National Workforce Association (NWA) has compiled this guide from information available on the World Wide Web about contacting Congressional members, information from presentations by media and lobbying experts, and information from other local workforce areas in Montana, Texas, and Florida, about how they sponsored a successful Congressional visit. **These are suggestions only**, but we believe with good planning and preparation, you can host a highly successful visit by your Congressional Members. If NWA can be of any assistance to you in your planning, please call us at (202) 842-4004 or e-mail info@nwaonline.org.

Special thanks to Isabelle Andrews of NYATEP; Sue Mohr of Montana; Ron Rodriguez and Terry Hudson of Houston Works USA; and Mason Jackson of Broward County, Florida, for their assistance in preparing this guide. Through hard work and persistence, they conducted successful Congressional visits in 2003 and have shared their advice here.

Good luck with your visits!!

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Talking Points to Make During the Visit

- This country continues to face an emerging crisis; changing demographics indicate that we will not have nearly enough skilled workers to fill the high skill demand jobs we have now and in the future. Unless additional funding is invested in workforce development, we will lose our competitive advantage in a global economy and face serious economic problems because of skilled worker shortages.

Tip: Give local economic implications, recent layoffs, etc. There is a statistics page attached with national statistics that will help you develop your case.

- Final passage of WIA Reauthorization legislation this year
- Sufficient money is needed for the One Stop system and the essential services you provide

TIP: stress the need to fully fund the system!

- Workforce Investment services are best delivered through a locally designed, locally delivered workforce system led by local business leaders, your local Workforce Investment Board.
- This is a time to be positive about the workforce system. **Be Positive!**

Step 1: Arranging the Visit

- Reach out to your Congressional Member or key congressional staff at the district office. If time will allow try to have a congressional staff person visit the One Stop Center, and build a relationship with that staff person. Remember the goal is to have your Congressional Member visit your One Stop Center during the week of May 24-31, 2004.

Tip: Try to work with one person, preferably the workforce staff person, or the scheduler in the district office. The member's schedule can change at any time and you will want to be kept informed of changes that will effect your Congressional Visit.

- Working with the staff person, arrange for a visit with the Congressional Representative.

Tip: Check the calendar and make sure you select a date when you know your Congressional Representative will be home from Washington.

- Make the contact through your local congressional office. Use whatever connections you have to get a commitment from your Congressional Representative to visit. Use WIB members, chief local elected officials, relatives, whoever has the best connection.

Tip: You may want to informally poll your LWIB members to see if any of them have a connection with congressional staff or the Congressperson themselves.

- Arrange for press coverage when the Congressional Member comes to visit, i.e., television and newspapers. Issue a press release through your chief local elected official's office.

Step 2: Preparation and Materials

- Prepare one or two of your WIB business members to be your chief spokesperson and lead the tour. They should be well versed on the One Stop Center, what it has to offer to businesses and job seekers, including services for dislocated workers. They should especially be prepped on the business services your One Stop offers.

Tip: When selecting the business spokesperson, consider these criteria:

- He/she has used the services of the One Stop and had a successful experience (so they can personalize what they say)
- They know the congressional representative
- They are well spoken
- They believe in and can speak to the importance of workforce investment for economic development
- They will be able to answer questions.

Tip: The businessperson should lead the tour and take the lead on answering questions. The WIB staff person should be there as back up, to answer questions the businessperson is unfamiliar with.

- Develop a one-page description of the services you have available to businesses and job seekers, including dislocated workers. (Highlight what you have for employed workers.)

Tip: Be brief, clear, and try to avoid jargon.

- Have your key statistics ready in a one page fact sheet, the number of job seeking customers you see, how many get jobs, their earnings, how many customers you helped that are now off welfare, the impact you have had on unemployment in your community, number of businesses you serve, types of services, business outcomes, how your One Stop has helped local economic development efforts. Keep these brief and focused.
- Have three or four points you want to have your local business spokesperson focus on. (The issues above may help you.) If the Congressional Representative asks what they can do for you, the biggest priority is the need for sufficient funding for One Stop infrastructure and the essential services you are providing through your One Stop. Stress that WIA funds should not be cut!
- Arrange to have satisfied customers available to speak to the Congressional Member, both businesses (essential) and job seekers (particularly a dislocated worker and a former Welfare recipient). They should share their personal stories on what the services of the One Stop have meant to them.

Tip: You will want to meet with each customer individually to brief them on what will happen during the visit, what will be expected of them, and to answer any questions they might have.

- Your Congressional Member may want to mingle and chat with folks using your resource room. Give your staff talking points to make should the Congressional member stop by the resource room
- Schedule the visit during peak traffic time in the center, when you are likely to have the most customers there.

Information to Have Ready

If possible, send this information to the Congressional staff person prior to the visit. This should be no more than one page.

- What your One Stop Does: A description of your One Stop including location, services provided to both businesses and job seekers, including dislocated workers, and partner agencies. Keep the information very simple; avoid jargon, and no more than one page! Bulleted lists are fine (and preferable.)
- Local Statistics: Number of job seeking customers you see during a month/year, number who got jobs, earning increases, welfare customers who left the roles, etc. Business statistics including number of businesses served, outcomes, plant closings and mass layoffs and how you were able to provide assistance, etc. Keep this simple and no more than one page.
- What you are asking for:
 - The background information: This country is facing an emerging crisis, changing demographics indicate that we will not have nearly enough skilled workers to fill the high skill demand jobs we have now and in the future. Unless more funds are invested in workforce development, we will lose our competitive advantage in a global economy and face serious economic problems because of skilled worker shortages. (Give local numbers, unemployment stats, recent layoffs, etc. See attached statistics page for ideas.)
 - Sufficient money is needed for the essential services you provide (do not cut WIA funds!)
 - Workforce investment services are best delivered through a locally designed, locally delivered workforce system led by local business leaders (your local Workforce Investment Board.)
- Your Business cards.

No more than three pages of information total, less is better.

Step 3: During the Visit

- Arrange for parking close to the center. This may sound like an easy task, but for many centers in urban areas, parking is an issue. Reserve a space in front of your center or very nearby, even if you have sufficient parking.
- Have a greeting committee ready at the front door to greet the Congressional Member and their staff.
- Have someone ready to take pictures, with a digital camera. (Rent or borrow a camera if your center does not have one, and make sure someone knows how to use it.)

Tip: Experience shows that, an event seems more important if someone is snapping pictures.

- Have a quiet space with a round table reserved so that the representative can speak with the customers you have selected for him/her to meet with.

Tip: Keep these meetings informal and personal, they should not be formal presentations.

- Have your business representative prepared to answer any tough questions (see sample difficult questions, at the on page 10 of this Guide.) If your business spokesperson does not know an answer, they should refer the question to the WIB chair or staff director.
- Collect contact information from all congressional staff (remember to ask for e-mail addresses too!) This will enable you to provide follow up information.

Step 4: Follow-up

- Send a thank-you note immediately to both the member and their staff.
- E-mail thank-you with pictures from the event.
- Send any positive newspaper clippings about the visit from your local paper to the member and staff.
- Call the staff person to say “Thank you” and to say how well the visit went. Ask if there is any additional information that you can provide them.
- Maintain an ongoing relationship with the staff. Call and e-mail them occasionally, keep them apprised of events at your center, send them updates on your progress, press coverage and invite them and the representative to visit the center again.
- Let them know you are a workforce investment information resource for their office. As proposed workforce legislation crosses their desk, if they have questions they can call you.
- It may take a while for the member to be able to schedule a visit. *Do not be discouraged*; this is part of a longer-term strategy to get members of Congress to understand what it is the workforce system does.
- The Local Coalition will be tracking these visits so that we can conduct appropriate follow-up in Washington and share success stories nationally. Please be sure to register on the web site of your national organization so that national local coalition staff can assist you with your visits and follow activities.

Prepare for the Tough Questions

- Why should Congress fully fund or increase funding for WIA, when this State/Local Area is not spending its WIA funding?

Tip: You should have local performance data on hand to explain your programs successes.

- Why should we maintain funding for WIA when Healthcare and Education or National Security are such priorities?
- When the Congressional representative mingles with other customers in the center, what if someone has a complaint? How would you resolve it?
- In addition, were there any local workforce situations where the congressional representative's office was contacted with a complaint? You should be prepared to talk about how the situation was resolved.

Take ownership! When answering tough questions, it is important not to blame other programs or individuals for the problem.

Possible Agenda for a Visit

- Greeting and introductions: Introduce members of your greeting team, other important dignitaries, give the Congressional Member and the staff prepared briefing materials. (5 minutes)
- Provide an orientation of the services offered at the Center. This should be done by a business spokesperson: what the One Stop does what the visitors can expect to see. (Review all briefing materials.) (5 minutes)
- Tour of the One Stop: Led by a business spokesperson. (10 – 15 minutes.)
- Members/staff meets with select customers. (15 minutes)
- Members/staff mingles with other customers at the center. (10 minutes)
- Coffee and refreshments so the members can mingle with other guests, meeting with the media, take pictures, etc. (15 minutes)

Total time: 60 – 65 minutes.

Please note: Whatever schedule you establish, it is very important to stick to your time frames! It is also important to start on time, so that you can end on time.

Useful National Statistics

Former Congressman Steve Gunderson, now a consultant for the Greystone Group offered excellent advice in his recent presentation on, “A Nation at Risk. Again” at the National Workforce Association Conference, in December of 2003. With the conflicting funding priorities in Congress, Gunderson states, “We must make this (Workforce Issues) a crisis if we have any hope of getting attention for our cause. That’s the tactic.” He further stated, “Our problem, quite bluntly, is that no one sees workforce investment as a crisis. Maybe they should.” Here are some selected statistics Mr. Gunderson offered to illustrate his point:

1. Our workforce demographics are changing in dramatic ways:

- The growth in the labor force is slowing from a 1.6% annual rate of growth in the past fifty years to only .6% annual growth projections for the next half-century.
- The workforce is becoming older. Today workers over 55 make up 13% of the total workforce. By 2020, they will compose 20%.
- The workforce is becoming much more diverse. White non-Hispanics will decrease from 73% of the total workforce today to only 53% in 2050. Hispanics will increase from 11% today to 24% in 2050, and Blacks will grow from 12% today to 14% in 2050. Asians will increase from only 5% today to 11% in 2050.
- In the next seven years, we will witness the following changes in our workforce: White non-Hispanics will fall to 65% of the workforce; Hispanics will climb to 16%. Blacks will grow to 13%, and Asians will increase to 7.3% of the total workforce.
- Youth labor (ages 16-24) is projected to increase by 3.4 million by 2010.
- Between 2000 and 2010, 41 million people will enter the American workforce. But 46 million college-educated baby boomers will retire in the next twenty years.

2. Today’s skill deficiencies and tomorrow’s skill demands will require a significant investment in education and training:

- Today, employers estimate that 39% of their current workforce and 26% of their new hires will have basic skill deficiencies.
- 42% of the projected new job growth between now and 2010 will require some level of college education degree and/or awards.
- 65% of all American employment now requires specific skills.
- 75% of the American Workforce will need to be retrained merely to retain their jobs.
- The salary gap between those with a college education and those without grew from 50% in 1980 to 100% today.

- The United States ranks 10th in adult literacy among the 17 highest income countries, and our nation has the largest gap between highly educated and poorly educated adults.

3. This training must be guided by, if not provided through, the nation's Workforce Development System:

- As of 2000, 7% of the White students, 11% of Black students, and 38% of Hispanic students did not complete high school.
- As of today, 84% of White workers, 91% of Black workers, and 97% of Hispanic workers enter the workforce without college degrees.
- We trail three other nations in the percentage of our population graduating from college, with many other nations poised to overtake us in the upcoming years.

You can use any of these national numbers and your local data whenever possible. Steve Gunderson also suggests framing workforce development as “an essential tool for economic development in our communities, not just for individuals without jobs.”

It is important to have members of the business community express their understanding of the value of workforce investment to their economic viability, especially your business spokesperson for the One Stop visit.