

CONGRESSIONAL INVITATIONS GUIDE

As part of your CRS Helping Hands event, consider inviting a member of Congress to observe what you are doing locally to stop global hunger. Below we have provided a sample invitation and some tips for including a member or congressional staff in the event.

SAMPLE INVITATION EMAIL TO CONGRESSIONAL OFFICES:

Dear [insert members' name],

As a member of [include name of institution, e.g. Saint Monica Catholic Church] located in [include city, state], I would like to invite you to an event that will help combat hunger around the world this [insert day, date and time] Please see more details in the attachment.

This CRS Helping Hands event, organized by [include name of group], and sponsored by Catholic Relief Services and other partners, will allow some [include number of] volunteers to pack [include number of] nutritious meals for people in need in Burkina Faso, West Africa. CRS, the international humanitarian relief and development agency of the Catholic community in the United States, will distribute these meals to people suffering from hunger.

We would very much welcome your participation in this important event, where the people of [your city, state] will demonstrate their concern for our brothers and sisters in need in Burkina Faso.

Thank you for your attention to this important initiative.

Sincerely,

[insert your name here]

Contact information:

Name of member of Congress

District director name and email address

Event coordinator name and email address, or scheduler name and email address

PREPARING FOR A VISIT FROM MEMBERS OF CONGRESS OR THEIR STAFF

BEFORE THE EVENT

1. Let congressional staff and members know who will attend. Pay special attention to prominent members of the community, clergy, and others the member or his or her staff may know.
2. Provide high-level talking points so they know what the event is about and what constituents may ask (e.g., “What is your position regarding hunger in Africa?”)
3. Provide an accurate agenda and expectations.
4. Let them know if media will attend and help organize interviews if you wish.

DURING THE EVENT

IF MEMBERS OF CONGRESS ATTEND

5. **Have an entrance and an exit strategy**—Members of Congress are usually hurrying off to one event after another. Therefore, designate a person at your event to welcome elected officials and their staff, explain the event, and help officials make a graceful exit.
6. **Provide recognition**—Publicly recognize elected officials who attend with an announcement at the beginning or end of the event.
7. **Provide a speaking opportunity**—Allow time for the officials to say a few words, if they wish.

FOR CONGRESSIONAL STAFF AND MEMBERS

8. **Prepare a call to action** related to your event. In the case of Helping Hands, an evergreen ask is: “Please support robust funding for international food aid so that families in Burkina Faso and elsewhere don’t go hungry.”
9. **Highlight the elected officials’ attendance through your social media channels.**

AFTER THE EVENT

10. Thank your elected officials for attending your event by sending a simple handwritten note to the district office.
11. Follow up with your elected officials on issues you and your community care about. Stay in touch with CRS’ advocacy initiative, Catholics Confront Global Poverty (confrontglobalpoverty.org) for information about global hunger issues that you can raise with your members of Congress. Invite them to future events and perhaps a town hall meeting at your organization to discuss issues you care about.

For more information visit Catholics Confront Global Poverty <http://www.confrontglobalpoverty.org/>