

**Guidance for Congressional Visits to ARS Facilities**

March 7, 2001

SUBJECT: Guidance for Congressional Visits to ARS Facilities

TO: Center/Laboratory Directors  
Research Leaders

FROM: Will Blackburn, Area Director, NPA /s/

Enclosed is some information from Marshall Tarkington for developing letters of invitation to Congress to visit your facility or location on an "open" basis. A sample letter has been provided along with different possible paragraphs so you can customize your letter. Also enclosed is a table consisting of the Congressional contacts for all ARS locations.

Every effort should be made to ensure that your Congressional contacts are informed and aware of your location and research. I highly encourage you to send out letters to your contacts by no-later-than March 23 as their first break will be on April 7. These letters do not need prior clearance from the ARS Correspondence Management Unit or Legislative Affairs. However, a "blind" copy needs to be forwarded to me and Marshall Tarkington.

The ARS-213 form, Report of Congressional Conversation, is now available on-line at <http://www.ars.usda.gov/afm/mgt/la.html> . All conversations and visits need to be immediately documented and faxed to the Area Office.

If you have any questions, please give me a call. Your proactive support is appreciated.

4 Enclosures  
Msg from M. Tarkington  
Sample Letter  
Misc Paragraphs

**From:** Marshall Tarkington  
**To:** Area-Directors  
**Date:** Thu, Mar 1, 2001 10:19 AM  
**Subject:** Guidance for Congressional Visits to ARS Facilities

Hello Everyone:

As discussed at the last AC meeting, locations in your Area should be encouraged to issue an invitation to their congressional delegation to visit the laboratory. Boilerplate language for invitation letters and a table with the names, phone/fax numbers, and addresses of Senators and Representatives for each ARS location are attached. A different letter and procedure is used when inviting the congressional delegation to a groundbreaking, open house, or building dedication. The guidance here is to convey that the "welcome mat" is waiting to be used.

Objectives of the congressional visits are multiple:

- Make Members of Congress aware of or remind them of the lab's presence and existence
- Showcase how Federal investments in ARS are paying dividends to their districts/state/nation
- Help them understand the organization affiliation with USDA-ARS
- Outline in lay terms the lab's research program scope and goals (emphasize problem solving, outcomes, public benefits)
- Identify customer/user groups who benefit from the research conducted in the lab

Other points to keep in mind:

- During a congressional visit you should expect to be asked about new program needs and resource issues (e.g. staffing, funding, facilities, land). At the request of the visitor, this information can be provided in writing as a follow-up to the visit but the nature and content of this communication should be cleared with the Area Director and in some cases with headquarters. This will help insure consistency in the numbers and information provided to Congress. Copies of the information provided should be forwarded to the ARS budget office and legislative affairs office.
- Holiday and recess periods are good opportunities for visits because most Senators and Representatives return to their State or District. The targeted periods for the 107th Congress are Easter Recess (April 7-22); Memorial Day Recess (May 26-June 3); Independence Day Recess (June 30-July 8); August Recess (August 4-September 4); Target Adjournment (October).
- Work with and invite the staff in the district/state offices to visit the labs. They are often a good resource for knowing when the elected official is going to be home for another event and helping you piggy-back a visit to your lab. You may also want to contact the Agricultural Legislative Assistant (Ag LA is listed on the attached table) and brainstorm

on how to target the invitation so the Senator or Representative will readily see the importance and connection of this lab visit with issues important to his/her constituents.

- Please bcc invitational letter to the Area Director and the Office of Legislative Affairs (OLA). After the congressional visit, please report the details on the ARS-213 form which is provided in electronic format on the OLA webpage (<http://www.ars.usda.gov/afm/mgt/la.html>) and can be emailed to the required offices with a mouse click.

Please call me if you have any questions.

Marshall Tarkington  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Agricultural Research Service  
Office of Legislative Affairs  
351 Jamie Whitten Building  
Washington, DC 20250  
Phone:202-720-3173  
Fax: 202-720-6882

cc: Sharon Drumm

December 19, 2002

The Honorable John Doe  
United States Senate  
513 Hart Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Doe:

I am writing to invite you and your staff to visit the (Name of Lab) in (City, State) at anytime convenient to you. We will be happy to accommodate your schedule, even on short notice.

Our research facility is a part of the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) which is the principal scientific research arm for the Department of Agriculture. Our network of laboratories, located in strategic areas of the country, conducts fundamental and applied research to respond to national emergencies; ensures the Nation a safe, nutritious, adequate food supply; protects the environment; commercializes new technologies; and provides technical support for other Federal agencies.

We believe the research conducted at the (Name of Lab) is playing a critical role in ARS' national problem-solving mission. Our work here deals with (Lab's Research Activities) it is important to the State of (Name of State) as well as the Nation because (Impact of Research).

I would be very pleased to brief you and your staff on our research programs, accomplishments, and plans for the future. We look forward to welcoming you to the (Name of Lab). Please contact me at (Phone Number).

Sincerely,

JOE SMITH  
Center Director

## Miscellaneous Paragraphs

- I want to extend an open invitation to you to visit the NAME OF LAB in LOCATION. We welcome the opportunity to show you our research facility and to explain how our programs impact BLANK. Our work is primarily on BLANK which is critical to our state and play a crucial role in the national problem-solving mission of the Agricultural Research Service.
- I am enclosing a copy of (WEBPAGE, BROCHURE, ARS MAGAZINE, MEDIA ARTICLE) which highlights the research conducted at this laboratory/gives an overview of our mission, personnel, and research objectives.
- Accompanying this letter, you will find some information regarding the NAME OF LAB in LOCATION. The mission of the Lab is BLANK. We would welcome the opportunity to provide you and/or your staff with a briefing and tour of our facility during your next visit to the STATE/DISTRICT. The ideal time would be BLANK when BLANK is underway. However, there is always something of interest to see so consider this an open invitation.
- The NAME OF LAB, location at TOWN/STATE, is one of the premier research facilities of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service, that is playing a critical role in meeting the needs of farmers and ranchers. Our work here deals with BLANK. We believe the impact of this research is essential to the future competitiveness of the agricultural industry.

## Address Blocks and Salutations

Inside Address for a U.S. Representative:     The Honorable John Doe  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Room Number and Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Salutation for a U.S. Representative:         Dear Congressman Doe/Congresswoman Doe:

Inside Address for a U.S. Senator:           The Honorable John Doe  
United States Senate  
Room Number and Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Salutation for a U.S. Senator:               Dear Senator Doe:

Note: Be sure your phone numbers, email address, etc., is provided on the letterhead or text so the Senators and Representatives can make contact easily.