

Family History Hill Day Training

Matt Menashes, CAE, NGS Exec. Dir.

Jan Alpert, Chair, RPAC



**Records
Preservation
& Access Coalition**



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Agenda

What is the Records Preservation and Access Coalition

Why Your Advocacy is Important

Preparing to Go to Capitol Hill on 10 April 2024

The Three “Asks”

NARA Appropriations

Social Security Death Master File

Transfer USCIS Records to NARA



**Records
Preservation
& Access Coalition**

What is RPAC

The Records Preservation and Access Coalition (RPAC) is a nationwide coalition that advises the genealogical and historical communities, and other interested parties, on ensuring proper access to vital records and on public policy related to strong records preservation practices.

The coalition represents over
2500 genealogy and history organizations
throughout the U.S.

Why is Personal Advocacy Important?



Members of Congress value relationships



Direct constituent interaction is important



Personalized information works best



Your voice matters



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Preparing for the Hill

What's a MOC

Create Meeting Objectives

Appointments: Face-to-Face with MOC, or Staff-Level Meeting

What to Expect

Taking Notes

Reporting Back

What is a MOC?

- MOC = Member of Congress
- A MOC is a Senator or a Representative. It's the term used when talking about anyone serving in Congress.
- You have three MOCs: your two Senators and your Representative.
- Do you know your House district #?





Create Meeting Objectives

- **Determine if the office accepts meeting requests via phone or online.**
- **Know whom you want to meet with.** Do you want a face-to-face with the MOC or will meeting with staff be a better option? You can always suggest a staff meeting if that is your preference.
- **Know the reason for your meeting** and share that with the scheduler. It's important to state why you want to meet with your MOC.
- **Understand your MOC's priorities.** Know your MOC in advance.
- **Identify how your reason to meet will pique the office's interest.** Let the office know something new and how the meeting will advance your relationship.

REQUEST A MEETING

Meeting with constituents helps me to better serve Delaware's interests in the U.S. Senate and share my work in Washington with folks back home. If you would like to request a meeting with me or my staff or submit an invitation to an event, please fill out the form below. While I unfortunately cannot accept every scheduling request, I will do my best to see that your request is accommodated.

Note: Fields marked with an * are required.

"*" indicates required fields

Location

LOCATION OF MEETING

Delaware

Washington, D.C.

Your Information

SALUTATION *

Required

FIRST NAME *

Required

LAST NAME *

Required

Your Contact Information

EMAIL *

Face-to-Face Meetings with MOC

- **Consider face-to-face** if you have not had a meeting with the MOC recently.
- The office scheduler handles these meetings.
- Remember though, **80% of meetings are with staff.**
- The House and Senate are **expected to be in session.**
- **A member may be called away** for votes even if you schedule a face-to-face.





Staff Meetings

- **Meeting with staff can be just as or more productive** than a face-to-face.
- **Learn who deals with NARA, USCIS, and Soc. Sec.** issues in the office. It may be separate staffers.
- The right staffer may give you more time to discuss policy details and share resources.
- If you know the correct staffer, the scheduler may hand you off to them directly to set up an appointment.

What to Expect

- **Meetings are usually very quick** and staff may be young.
- **Do not assume they know your issue.** Provide the background.
- When you meet with a MOC or staffer, **they want to know what action you want them to take.** Your “primary ask” will be your main leave-behind document. You may share the others as well.
- **Use the RPAC documents** to frame your conversation.
- **Email documents ahead** to help staff prepare.
- You may be asked to **fill out an appropriations request form.**





Taking Notes #1

- **Follow up is important.** Take clear and concise notes during the meeting. You will want to follow up and so will RPAC. We need your notes to follow up appropriately.
- **Use the RPAC Congressional Meeting Minutes form** at <https://bit.ly/RPACHillDay2024>
- If it is a choice between what you said and what a staffer said, **always write what the staffer said.** Use initials to identify who is speaking in your notes.



Taking Notes #2

- **What was the (primary and secondary) ask** in this meeting?
- **Concerns and questions of the staffer/MOC** with respect to our policy.
- **Recommendations the staffer/MOC had** on policy or strategy.
- **Points the staffer/MOC found interesting.**
- **Your sense of the staffer.** Were they engaged? Were they interested? Were they hostile? Did they want to be anywhere but in that meeting? What was their body language?
- **Action items** for the MOC/staffier. Action items for you or RPAC.

Reporting Back and Follow Up

- **Fill out your meeting minutes.**
- **Email your minutes to Jan Alpert**, RPAC Chair, at rpac@ngsgenealogy.org.
- **Follow up** after your meeting with the office/staffer to **thank them profusely** and offer to meet with the MOC or staff in the district.





The Three “Asks”

- Available at bit.ly/RPAC2024Priorities
- All three of these are priorities for RPAC.
- You or your organization may prefer to use one of these as your primary “ask.”
- **Share the materials in advance** and as “leave behinds”.
- Familiarize yourself with these issues and be able to **provide personal examples**, or examples of local impact in the state or district.

NARA Funding (Appropriations)

Financial Services and General Government Subcommittees

- Congress must fund NARA including the Federal Records Center facilities, the National Personnel Records Center, and grants at the **President's FY2025 request level.**
- **Genealogists are the largest NARA user group** and are in every county in the US.
- Our community **provides NARA with millions of volunteer hours.**
- **Our community also funds NARA's records conservation and digitization backlog** including the War of 1812 Pension Files and now the Veteran Bounty Land Warrant Application Files. **We have provided NARA over \$5 million and counting.**



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Congress Must Provide Oversight & USCIS Must Transfer Files to NARA

- **Congress must provide oversight of the USCIS Genealogy Program.** USCIS is the sole source of millions of unique historical records only available to the public for a fee. This program is riddled with customer service issues.
- **Request fulfillment takes up to three (3) years.** The agency does not have a plan to improve service or close the years-long backlog.
- **USCIS knows NARA is the appropriate repository** for records scheduled for permanent retention.
- **USCIS must coordinate with and transfer their historical records** (and associated finding aids) to NARA where they belong.



Social Security Death Master File

- **The Social Security Death Master File (DMF) must be made public.**
- **A public DMF is the best antidote to fraud.**
- The **Budget Act of 2013 significantly hampers multiple constituencies**, including medical, historical, and economic researchers from accessing the records.
- Genealogists who run **small businesses cannot access the DMF** to provide complete information for their clients.



Summary

- We're excited for Family History Hill Day.
- Start scheduling your appointments.
- Use the RPAC Congressional Meeting Minutes form bit.ly/RPACHillDay2024.
- Send your notes back to RPAC.
- Enjoy the experience.

Additional Resources

RPAC Leave Behinds

bit.ly/RPAC2024Priorities

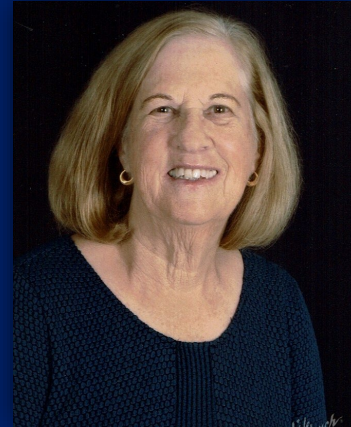
Records Not Revenue Issues Page

recordsnotrevenue.com/issues

National Humanities Day Advocacy Resources

nhalliance.org/federal-funding/had/

Contact Information



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Thank You



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