Max Nikias led a group of trustees and university officials to D.C. last month, part of an annual USC trip to brief congressional and administration officials on issues important to both the educational community and the university. What differed about this year’s trip, Nikias said, was that uncertainty about the legislative agenda was far deeper than in years past. “The difference is that clearly when there is a new administration there is an uncertainty about how things will work out in the future in terms of legislation. … That level of anxiety was higher than in previous years.” Among the topics on the agenda were the impacts of the Trump administration’s travel ban, concern over a proposed budget that would affect the National Institutes of Health, and support for students in the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, among other issues. Despite the uncertainty, Nikias said the group took the climate as a chance to advocate more forcefully. The reaction, he said, was on the whole positive. “Clearly, I felt there is support for higher education and the issues we care about, from both sides of the aisle,” he said, adding that he came away optimistic from the meetings. The group, which included trustees Lisa Barkett, Kathy Leventhal, Bruce Ramer, Ed Roski, and Christopher Cox, as well as USC’s Michael Quick, Karen Gallagher, and Tom Sayles, met with Washington Post Publisher and Chief Executive Fred Ryan, also a trustee, before taking to the Hill.
1. USC President C. L. Max Nikias and POLITICO co-founder and editor-in-chief John Harris, discussing college access before a USC reception in Washington, D.C.

2. USC Provost Michael Quick and Congresswoman Karen Bass

3. (from left) USC Trustees Lisa Barkett, Kathy Leventhal, Bruce Ramer, and Christopher Cox, pictured with Representative Lucille Roybal-Allard, First Lady Niki C. Nikias, President Nikias, and USC Trustees Daniel Epstein and Ed Roski

4. (from left) Ed Roski, Lisa Barkett, Mrs. Nikias, President Nikias, Senator Kamala Harris, Daniel Epstein, Bruce Ramer, Kathy Leventhal

5. USC’s delegation pictured with USC Trustee, CEO and publisher of The Washington Post, Fred Ryan (right of Nikias)

6. President and Mrs. Nikias pictured with USC Trustees and Representative Michael McCaul (fifth from left)

Photos by Eric Abelev