

HOW TO CONTACT AND MEET YOUR LEGISLATOR

Meeting with a legislator is an extremely important part of advocacy. It is an opportunity to gain a powerful supporter for your organization. Good planning and preparation will make for an effective meeting.

- **Develop an agenda.** Pick a few main issues to discuss and choose your talking points. Choose at least one issue that does not require an increase in funding.
- **Do your homework – on the issue, and on your legislator.**
 - **Issue:** Prepare a history of your issues and know all of the background information, as well as recent developments.
 - **Legislators:** Who are my representative and senators? What is their legislative record and general philosophy? What issues are they passionate about? What committees are they on? Are they newly elected, or more senior? What political party do they belong to?
- **Make an appointment.** Let the person scheduling the appointment know what you want to discuss and how much time you will need. Also inform them of everyone who will be attending the meeting
- **Be punctual.** Legislators keep very busy schedules. They generally don't have time to wait for people who are not on time.
- **Dress appropriately.** Your attire should be conservative and professional.
- **You may actually meet with a staffer or an aide.** If the legislator is unable to attend the meeting for some reason, you may meet with a member of their staff. It is important to treat them with respect as they are in a position to help your cause.
- **Introduce yourself.** State your name and your role within the realm of your organization.
- **State your objective.** Immediately state the issue or bill you wish to discuss.
- **Thank him or her for previous support.** Know how they have voted on your issue in the past and show appreciation.
- **State local concerns.** Explain how this issue effects your community and the surrounding region.
- **Refer to pending legislation.** State how supporting pending legislation will help your cause.
- **Use anecdotes.** Personal stories can help any legislator relate to the human side of an issue.
- **Encourage questions.** Educate the legislator as much as possible. If you don't have an answer for a question, say so and offer to find the answer and get back to them.
- **Ask for the legislators support.** Let the legislator know you want a firm response without threatening him or her.
- **Ask what you can do.** Offer to provide further information, arrange another meeting, etc.

- **Leave written materials.** Bring fact sheets, brochures, newspaper articles that you can leave with the legislator.
- **Thank the legislator for their time.** Send a written thank you as soon as you get home.
- **Report outcome of communication to your organization.**

HOW TO CONTACT YOUR LEGISLATOR BY PHONE

- Identify yourself and your hometown, especially if you reside within the legislator's district.
- Identify the bill by name and number.
- Briefly state your position with rationale behind it.
- Ask for the legislator's views.
- Show appreciation for his or her service. Be positive if possible.
- If the legislator asks for more info, supply it ASAP if you have it or refer the request back to your organization.

HOW TO WRITE TO YOUR LEGISLATORS

Legislators know that people who take time to write also take time to vote. Letters are tangible evidence of support for a specific issue.

- **Personalize it.** Be sure to sign your name and possibly a hand-written note. Show that this letter has not been mass-produced. You can even share a short personal story relating to the issue.
- **Be concise.** Limit your letter to one typewritten page, two pages at the most.
- **State your purpose.** State your goal in the first paragraph so as to set a clear theme for the rest of the letter.
- **Refer to legislation.** Referring to pending legislation will demonstrate the urgency of your issue. Cite the bill by name and number.
- **State you concerns.** If you oppose pending legislation, state what adverse effects may result from its passage.
- **Think locally.** Explain how the issue affects people in your community. These people are the ones who elected the legislator.
- **Ask for the legislator's views.** Do not demand his support. He may have reasons for opposing your issue. Establishing a positive relationship will enable you to influence his or her decision.
- **State the facts.** Do not fabricate information, lie or exaggerate.
- **Be sure to include your name and address.** This way a response can be mailed to you.
- **Address your letter properly.**

*Source: Capital Associates, Inc.
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