

GUIDELINES FOR MEETINGS WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS

One of the most effective ways to influence the decisions of an elected official is in face-to-face visits. Frequent contacts are necessary to associate your face and name with your issues and your cause.

Whether you will meet one on one or with a group, plan the meeting and develop an agenda to cover all the points you wish to make. Pick just one or two issues you wish to discuss. If it will be a first time meeting, select an issue about which he/she may be sympathetic - or at least open-minded. Here are some simple steps to follow:

MAKE AN APPOINTMENT: If you drop by without an appointment, you may wait, or you may force him/her to postpone something else, thereby, creating negative feelings before you begin. **BE ON TIME.**

ALWAYS INTRODUCE YOURSELF: Even if this is a second or third meeting. Don't put the elected official or their staff member in the awkward position of having to grope for your name. Thank him/her for taking the time to meet with you.

GET DOWN TO BUSINESS QUICKLY: Begin on a positive note. State the Bill number, title and author, or state the issue, your position, and what you want him/her to do. Stay on message.

THANK HIM/HER FOR PREVIOUS SUPPORT: Elected officials like to know that you know of their record. If you don't know the record, thank him/her for taking the time to meet with you.

STATE YOUR CASE: Be clear and specific. Do not use jargon or acronyms. Provide information about how this issue impacts his/her constituency and people throughout the state. Use fact sheets, charts, statistics, etc.

USE PERSONAL STORIES OR ANECDOTES: Remember, your goal is to persuade... and a personal story will leave an image that the elected official will remember when he/she votes on the issue.

ASK WHAT YOU CAN DO: Ask if you can provide further information or contact others. If they ask a question and you do not know the answer, tell them you will get back to them and make sure you do.

ASK HOW HE/SHE PERCEIVES THE ISSUE: Make a clear, specific request and ask for an answer. (e. g. Can we count on your vote for the bill?) Do not issue an ultimatum!

LEAVE WRITTEN MATERIALS: Your elected official will file the materials and refer to them when questions come up later and/or when he/she votes on the issue.

THANK HIM/HER AGAIN: Send a written thank you, recapping the meeting, as soon as you return home. If you promised anything, please do it quickly.

Even if you have a firm appointment, a last minute change in their schedule may be unavoidable. If that happens, you may be referred to an aide. Treat the person with the same respect and courtesy you would extend to the elected official, as he/she is in a position to advance your cause.

