

So starting with the basics, let's find your legislator. Easy enough. Start by going to the government website that leads you to them. One of the most effective ways to then engage your legislator is to meet them. We'll cover the basics. Legislators want to meet you. But don't get frustrated during the process.

SCHEDULE THE MEETING

- Be flexible. Their time is important.
- Make it easy for them to meet you. Go to them and offer multiple times to meet. Do so in advance.
- Ask if you can have a picture taken with them—this is your best guarantee you will have at least a few minutes with your Member.
- Contact the legislator's scheduler or appointment secretary to arrange an appointment.
- Introduce yourself and who you represent, noting that you are a constituent, and explain your purpose for the meeting.
- Confirm your appointment the day before.
- Plan for delays or cancellations. And have a backup plan such as knowing others you could meet should you be kept waiting. For example, know which member of the staff is briefed about the issue you want to discuss, and meet with that person.

BEFORE THE MEETING

- Research the legislator's opinions, as well as present and past positions.
- Prepare simple, to the point information that can be used during the meeting and left behind.
- Prepare your message. Stick to one issue. Know how much time you will have and plan accordingly. Rehearse.
- Anticipate questions. Write them down. Prepare answers.

AT THE MEETING

- Be on time. Be prepared. Dress nicely.
- Open the conversation.
- Don't be distracted and keep small talk to a minimum.
- If you know something about your legislator's personal interests, and you share them in common, feel free to use that as an icebreaker.
- Say whom you are, what you want to discuss, and what you want your legislator to do. Don't overwhelm them.
- Distribute your fact sheets and go into your message. Emphasize how the legislator's district can, will be or is affected by the issue. In other words it is political and it is local. It is about the well-being of their constituents and of course future votes for them.
- Don't be intimidated. After all you are the expert.
- Try to find out where your legislator stands on your issue. Let that guide next steps.

- Are they being polite, but non-committal? Ask them to read additional information about your issue.
- Somewhat interested? Ask them to come out to a program or visit.
- If they are already on board and supportive, ask them to share the message with other members of their caucus.
- Plan next steps.
- Thank them for their time.

AFTER THE MEETING

- Prepare other materials that may be requested.
- Get back to the legislator with questions that still need answering.
- Follow up at an agreed upon time with the appropriate staff member.
- Send a written thank you note.

Navigating the legislative waters is a process. So stick to it, be persistent and be on point, and over time you will score victories.