

Plan Your Meeting



The first thing to determine is where and when you want to meet. If it is **not during session** then you will be able to meet at the District Office which is closer to home and where you will have more of your Legislator's time and attention. If it is **during session** about current legislation then you may still be able to get an appointment in district, otherwise, it will require a special trip for you to the Capital and a visit to the State Capitol building.

Create a detailed plan. Decide who is going to be present at the meeting. For example: just yourself; or, you and a few other constituents; or, you and representatives from a particular organization. Also, consider who, apart from your legislator might be present at the meeting, like a staff person.

Schedule an appointment. It is much easier for legislators to arrange a meeting if they know who you are, what you wish to discuss, and what your relationship is to the area or interests represented by your legislator. Scheduling an appointment will help gain your legislator's full and undivided attention. Call, Email or Webmail your legislator's office asking to schedule a meeting. Make certain you identify yourself, note the purpose of the meeting, and whether other individuals, other than yourself, will be in attendance. If you can't meet directly with you legislator, you can schedule an appointment to meet with their staff person.

Confirm the appointment. You should call to confirm your meeting. Sometimes legislators have important, last minute meetings that can't be avoided. Calling to confirm will save you a trip to the office and will give you the opportunity to reschedule.

Know your issue. It is helpful to research relevant information including any recent studies or news articles relating to your issue prior to meeting with your legislator. You should develop a comprehensive understanding about the pros and cons of your issue and know the current status of legislation. In addition, it is important to know your lawmakers past voting record and what their priorities are.

Be prepared. If you are planning a group meeting, it is a good idea to have a meeting with the group before you meet with the legislators. It can be effective for your group to select a spokesperson and maybe one or two others who can act as supporting roles - providing statistics or other anecdotes. Practice your advocacy in front of the group, or have someone play "devils advocate" and ask tough questions of the spokespersons.

Select a scribe. It is a good idea for the group to select a scribe who will take notes throughout the meeting. It is especially important to write down any position statements, questions or special requests made by the legislator. The scribe can also be assigned to write the follow-up response and thank-you note.

Outline your concerns. Present a unified front. Spend some time before the meeting outlining your 2 or 3 major talking points and supporting statements. Keep in mind you will have limited time, so your arguments need to be clear and concise. Outlining your concerns will help you - and the group - stay focused.

Execute the Meeting:

Provide accurate information. Make certain you begin the meeting by introducing yourself and anyone else participating in the meeting. Also, clarify again why you requested the meeting and what you are asking your legislator to do.

Briefly make your pitch. Remember to keep it short and simple. It is important to restate the purpose of the meeting, outline the major concerns and present supporting documentation. Finally, thank your legislator for taking time to meet with you. It is important that your lawmaker understand how the proposed legislation will personally impact you.

Be punctual. It's easy to get lost in government buildings. Make certain that you know where the meeting place is and that you arrive a few minutes early. If you have some extra time, use it to relax and review your talking points.

Be patient and flexible. Due to crowded schedules, it is not uncommon for a legislator to be late, or to have a meeting interrupted. If interruptions do occur, be flexible. When the opportunity presents itself, continue your meeting with a member of the staff.

Be political. Your legislator wants to represent the best interests of their district. Keep your pitch short and to the point. Begin your meeting by informing your legislator what action you want done. Wherever possible demonstrate the connection between what you are requesting and the interests of the legislator's constituency. Ask questions to clarify any position statements made by the legislator and be prepared to answer questions from your lawmaker.

Leave Your Contact Info. Be sure to leave your personal contact information with your lawmaker or their staff. At a minimum, you should include the names, mailing and email addresses, and phone numbers of each person attending the meeting. Leaving your contact info allows your legislators to follow-up with you personally.

Do Follow-Up. Finally, be responsive, follow up the meeting with a thank you letter that outlines the different points covered during the meeting, reiterating any commitments he or she has made to you and send along any additional information and materials requested.