

Tips for a Successful Meeting with Your Legislator

Coordinate with your meeting group. Before your meetings, you should coordinate with your meeting group to determine who will lead the meeting, who will speak during the meeting, and other roles, so that your meeting is as efficient and effective as possible in the limited time that you have.

Introduce yourself and your organization. Briefly introduce who you are, who you represent, and why you are there.

Get local & try to connect on a personal level. Members are primarily motivated by local concerns. As you make your “ask” you should draw on your work and experience to build the meeting out from there. Sharing stories about your programs and clients is a powerful way to demonstrate the relevance of your work to your community and your legislator’s state or district.

Go right to the “Ask” and get a clear commitment. Because meeting time is limited, it’s important to know exactly what you want out of your meeting and from your legislators. Right after introductions you should go right to your “Ask.” If there is a bill you would like your legislators to support, ask for that directly. If you would like your legislator to support a particular program, name it. Be specific and make sure to push past vague responses—ask a staffer or Member for a clear stance on the Ask or if more time is needed for an agreement, follow-up on the issue in the future.

Be brief and informed. Lawmakers and their staff have packed schedules. Rather than go into depth, offer an overview and leave behind materials with details. Know how the program or policy you will discuss works and what it can do for your community. If you do not have an answer to a question, offer to follow up on it. Make sure you get your key points in about the issues you are advocating for before the conversation goes towards other areas.

Don’t talk politics. They’re talking to you because you know about the state/district and about activities that are relevant to their constituents. It’s generally a faux pas to talk about campaigning, contributions, or even congressional political strategy. Talk about your work and how the law could help you, let *them* worry about the politics.

Invite them to a tour of your work. Members like to know what is going on in their states and district. During the meeting you should make sure to invite them to tour your work and/or to attend any local events that you may be planning.

Collect Contact Information. Get the names and contact information of everyone you meet with during the meeting.