



Tips for meeting with legislators

PREPARE IN ADVANCE

- Make an appointment ahead of time. While you are in Jefferson City, make an appointment to see legislators or visit departments. Be sure to be on time.
- Know the name and district of the legislator you are visiting, who he/she represents (counties, cities), where they live and what they do for a living, and the committees they're on that have any connection to your issue.
- Make yourself notes about the issue or problem that concerns you including the bill number and title that it pertains to (if there is one), and what you want done.
- If you have expert knowledge, share it with the legislator. It will be welcomed. No legislator can be an expert on everything, but an important rule of thumb is to never underestimate their intelligence and never overestimate their knowledge. If you have read the bill carefully and/or understand the issues involved as a result or have personal knowledge, you may be of great assistance to an elected official.

INTRODUCE YOURSELF

When you introduce yourself, make it clear who you are and what community or organization, if any, you are with.

CLEARLY STATE YOUR POSITION

on the priority and ask them where they stand Keep it short, straightforward, and courteous.

- Ask directly for what you want - support or opposition for a bill, a funding item, an amendment, etc.
- Be constructive. If a bill seeks to deal with an issue, you admit exists, but you believe the bill is the wrong approach, explain what you believe is the right approach.
- Do not "overkill." An elaborate sales job or long, emotional speech will likely not go over well in the limited time you have to share your perspective with an elected official. They do, however, welcome your well-prepared facts and views, presented in a straightforward manner.

GIVE LEGISLATOR A CHANCE TO RESPOND

Listen - he/she will appreciate it, and it will give you important insight.

- Don't demand a commitment before the facts are in. Give your legislator a fair chance to examine all sides of an issue. The legislative process is very complex, and bills or issues change. Bills rarely become law in the same form as introduced. It is possible that the bill you supported originally is so changed in the process that you would oppose its final form.
- Disagree but don't be disagreeable. It's easy to get frustrated when discussing different viewpoints. Let legislators explain their views, without interrupting. They often have input from many resources to which you may not have access.

TRY AND RESPOND TO QUESTIONS, BUT

Tell them you'll try to find out and will get back to them (and do!).

THANK THEM FOR THEIR TIME

Leave them with a positive comment.

FOLLOW UP

It is helpful to take notes on what was said.

- Send a thank you note for the meeting time. Make appreciative note of any positive commitments by the legislator.
- Get back to them with any promised information, or at least a report that you tried but it wasn't available (if that's the case).
- Share with the group you're working with, what you learned.