



## Tips for Talking to a Legislator

**1. Consider yourself an information source.**

Legislators have limited time, staff, and interest on any one issue. They can't know every issue in depth, and constituent contact helps them. YOU are a source of authentic, important information.

**2. Introduce yourself and credential yourself. Make it personal.**

Tell the legislator your name, where you live, and why they should listen to you. Are you directly affected by the issue? Do you know someone who is? Help the legislator understand why this issue matters—to you especially. A personal story can be the KEY that changes a legislator's mind.

**3. Tell the truth.**

There is no faster way to lose credibility than to give false information to your legislator.

**4. Know who is on your side.**

It is helpful for the legislator to know what other groups, individuals, and/or legislators are also in favor of what you support.

**5. Know the opposition.**

Who is on the other side of the issue? Know what their arguments might be and, if appropriate, tell the legislator what the answers or rebuttals to those arguments are.

**6. Don't be afraid to admit you don't know something.**

If the legislator asks you a question you do not know or wants information you do not have, acknowledge it, and offer to get the information they are looking for. This gives you a reason to follow up and remind them of your position, as well.

**7. Be specific about what you are asking for. MAKE THE ASK.**

Do you want them to vote a particular way on a particular bill? Ask for that! Do you want an answer to a specific question? Say so! The legislator should walk away from the conversation completely understanding why you approached them and what you want them to do in response-even if they are not going to do it.

**8. Follow up.**

Find out if your legislator did/did not do what you asked them to do. Then call them or write them an email thanking them or asking for an explanation.

**9. Don't burn any bridges.**

It is very easy to be passionate when talking about an issue that is close to your heart. It is important to remember to leave the conversation on as positive a note as you can, even if you and the legislator disagree. Building a relationship with the legislator for the long term will be important in the future when you want to go back and have a productive conversation with them.

**10. Remember: YOU elected them!**

Your tax money pays the salary of the legislator. YOU are the employer and they are the employee. You should be courteous and respectful, but don't be intimidated. It is part of their job to listen to you and represent you in the legislature. In almost every case, legislators are very grateful for your input and like working with the people whom they represent.