

Advocacy 106: Visiting Your Legislator

Visiting your representatives in government is an effective way to convey your concerns. You don't have to be a great speaker and you don't have to bring a big group but you will be most effective if you are prepared!

Make an appointment.

Tell the scheduler the dates you are available, the number of people who will be attending and the issue you wish to discuss. Then, a day or two before the, call to confirm.

Note: Legislators schedules are busy sometimes a moving target, as a result rescheduling may be necessary.

Prepare for the appointment.

- Try to find out if your representative has states a position on the issue of interest.
 - Review the background on the issue and the specific piece of legislation.
 - Prepare a one page (or shorter) position paper to leave with your legislator.
 - Make a plan for the visit
 - Choose a spokesperson that will begin the conversation and ensure that it stays on topic.
 - Keep personal introductions short. Let the representative know your name, where you live (especially if you live in their district), and any brief connection you have to the issue (ex: I volunteer for my church's weekly meal program for our local homeless shelter).
 - Decide who will say what.
 - Think of possible counterpoints and work our responses.
 - Practice the visit if possible.
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During the visit:

- Dress professionally and be on time.
 - Explain who you are and why you are there
 - Be clear and concise, state your position and present the information and experiences that informs your position.
 - Be polite and firm in explaining your position.
 - Stay on topic, if the conversation strays bring it back to the issues at hand.
 - Tell your legislator what you want them to do.
 - Write down any questions you cannot answer and get back to the representative when you have found the answer.
 - Leave a short summary of your position.
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Follow up the visit with a thank you letter and the answer to any outstanding questions that came from the visit.



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A program of Catholic Community Services of King County