

# TIPS ON MEETING WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS

## REMEMBER THE FOLLOWING TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE MEETINGS:

- 1) **Know your agenda and roles going in.** How does the conversation go? Who does what?
- 2) **Who you are matters. Tell your story.** Why do you care and why are you moved to act?
- 3) **Deliver a clear, compelling message.** Your message isn't just a list of bulleted policy points, but should address why the official should care and act. Provide local context. Make a strong connection between the issue and your local community that the legislator represents. Use local examples to illustrate your issue's importance.
- 4) **Demonstrate your power.** Who do you represent? How many members? Are you a constituent? Did you work on the person's last campaign?
- 5) **Politely control the conversation.** Remember what you came for. Politicians/staff often control conversations with small talk, talking about things other than the issue at hand, or asking questions they know you can't answer. Stay focused on your agenda and diplomatically move the conversation where you want it to go.
- 6) **Make a hard ask.** "Can we count on you to support the principles we've laid out?" Pause and wait for an answer.
- 7) **Be strategic in your response to their position:** Thank supporters and help turn them into champions. If you can, give undecideds the information they need to become supporters or commit to get them something if you don't know it. Neutralize the opposition if possible, but don't waste too much time trying to argue with them.
- 8) **Saying "I don't know" is not a crime.** It's always OK to say that you don't know but will follow up with an answer they're looking for. You don't have to be a policy expert to be effective.
- 9) **Remember: Rome wasn't built in a day.** You're not going to get everything you want out of this meeting. It's the beginning of a critical relationship that will ultimately move them over time.
- 10) **Do:** stay positive, talk in the public interest, view this as an educational process, and take the long view (no permanent enemies, no permanent friends).
- 11) **Don't:** whine, threaten, bluff, misrepresent the facts, malign the opposition, personalize differences of opinion, or burn bridges.

## GRASSROOTS LOBBYING MEETINGS

### Meeting Goals

- Have a clear agenda and understanding of peoples' roles.
- Convey quickly who you are and why you've asked for the meeting.
- Deliver a clear, concise, compelling and personal message
- Make a direct ask for support
- Assess where the member of Congress stands and respond accordingly
- Think through and practice responses to the tough questions they might ask

### Meeting Roles

1. **Leader** (Responsible for leading introductions, meeting overview, closing, and generally keeping things on track)
2. **Storyteller** (Delivers the message, makes it personal, speaks to why the legislator should act)
3. **Pitcher** (Makes the hard ask and is prepared to respond depending on legislator's position)
4. **Recorder** (Takes comprehensive notes on what the legislator says)
5. **Supporting Actors** (Don't have speaking roles, but show strength in numbers)

Note: If you have more than ten minutes, there will likely be more time to tell more or a more in-depth story.

### **Sample "10 minute" Grassroots Lobbying Meeting Agenda**

1. **Introductions** (*1 min*) – Very brief: names & hometowns
2. **Meeting Overview** (*1 min*) – Why are you there? What do you want to talk about?
3. **Personal Stories** (*2 min*) – Why are you moved to action? Why should they act?
4. **The "Ask"** (*2 min*) – Yes or no: will they support the principles?
5. **Strategic Response** (*2 min*) – Moving supporters to champions; Undecideds to supporters; Opponents to sideline-sitters
6. **Closing** (*1 min*) – Respectful wrap-up, thank-you, clarify any needed follow-up

## **“The Pitch”**

- Introduction
- Connection
  - Establish rapport—your connection
- Benefit
  - Why it matters to the person
  - Why it’s necessary
- Direct Ask
- Wait
- React depending on response
- Thanks and follow up

Once get an answer to your request for a commitment, you will know if the legislator supports you, opposes you, or is undecided.

### **If they support you:**

- **Thank them**, and thank them again
- **Be a resource to them.** If they need additional information or help in any way, offer to make that available to them.
- **Try to move them from being a supporter to a champion of your cause.** Ask them if they will carry the bill to their colleagues, speak at a public event, write a commentary for the newspaper, and take any other action that will move the legislation forward.

### **If they oppose you:**

- **Thank them for their time and don’t waste yours.** If they really don’t support you, move on to those who will.
- **Stay cordial and friendly.** Even though you disagree on this issue, you may be in agreement on another issue. Keep the door open to working together in the future.

### **If they remain undecided:**

- **Try to understand** their reservations and continue to communicate with them.
- **If they need additional information**, be sure you get it tot hem in a timely manner.
- **Think about whose voice is important to them** and try to mobilize it on your behalf.