

How to Talk to a Legislator

A Step-by-Step Guide

Talking to legislators can seem intimidating. It doesn't have to be. Use this guide to help simplify the process.

Step 1: The Introduction - Start with Respect and Gratitude

- Begin by thanking them for their time and service.
- Acknowledge that their schedule is busy, and you appreciate the opportunity to speak.
- Introduce yourself, where you live (mention you are a constituent if true), and any relevant role or connection to the issue. (This could include an organization with whom you're connected, or your experience.)
- Practice and keep it brief—this helps establish credibility.

Step 2: State Your Purpose

- Clearly state why you are there, and what bill or issue you care about.
- Use simple and direct language because you want to be understood.
- Legislators have to keep track of many issues. They may or may not know much about the topic you are talking about.
- Remember that you are the expert on your story.
- Provide evidence of the problem and the solution.

Step 3: Share a Personal Story

- Your experience, your story gives you expertise. Legislators appreciate hearing how policies affect their constituents.
- Statistics are important, but stories are memorable, and they move people.
- Stories connect issues to "real life". People vote with their values and their heart.

Step 4: Make an Ask

- Give them something to say yes to.
- Be sure it's clear and specific.
- Do more than share problems and concerns, ask them to do something. Tell them what to support.
 - "Will you support.."
 - "Can we count on you to do this?"
 - "How can you help us...?"
- If you know the bill number, it's helpful, but if not, simply talk about the issue.

Step 5: Bring a resource and offer to be a resource

- Building relationships, providing education and information to policy makers can create connections that last.
- Let them know you are willing to answer any questions they have and be honest if you don't know the answer.
- Leave materials with them that cover your talking points and have your contact information.

Step 6: Be Polite, Be Friendly

- Always thank them for their time and willingness to meet.
- If you disagree, do not argue. Focus on educating them on issues, being open, and gracious.
- Being polite and friendly might get you welcomed back for later conversations. If they remember you as gracious, friendly, and polite, they will be happy to see you in the future.

Step 7: Follow Up

- Send them an email the day after thanking them for their time.
- If you said you would follow up with any information, send it along with the thank you.