
Tips for Legislative Meetings

Personal meetings with legislators and their key staff members are the most effective way to make your case on an issue. Such visits also are a good way to introduce yourself as a constituent. A personal meeting can be difficult to accomplish with a policymaker's busy schedule, but remember that you are offering an important business contact. You can arrange the meeting with the policymaker directly or through staff aides.

The following suggestions will help make the best use of your time and the legislator's:

- Always make an appointment. Arranging the first meeting may require patience on your part, but be persistent. Later, as you become known as a resource, gaining appointments will be less difficult. This situation will occur especially if you also become known as a campaign contributor, political activist, or a Health Freedom Florida member who can muster support on the issues from a variety of groups through your coalition activities.
- Be prepared to meet with key legislative personnel or committee staff members if the legislator is unavailable at the last moment. Briefing these people before your visit also may be useful so that they can prepare the legislator. Staff aides are often more knowledgeable about details of a specific issue than lawmakers themselves.
- If several individuals join you in the visit, decide in advance who will be the principal spokesperson. That individual, of course, should encourage others to participate in the discussion to share particular expertise or experiences.
- If you want to discuss a specific issue, make sure you are thoroughly familiar with all aspects of it before going into the meeting.
- When talking to legislators, try to be concise, well organized, and mindful of the other person's time. State your view firmly, but be attentive to the policymaker's position also.
- Open the discussion by reminding the legislator who you are, whom you represent (i.e., yourself, your business, your Health Freedom Florida Chapter), and why you are there. Know the issue and the bill number. Clearly state your concern about the issue, how it will affect you, your institution, and the community. Avoid harsh accusations. Be polite

and respectful. Often, we forget how we sound when we are particularly passionate about an issue.

- Always be truthful and never mislead. Your personal credibility and that of Health Freedom Florida is at stake. If you do not have the answer to a question, do not improvise. Promise to get back to the questioner with the necessary information, and be sure to do so promptly.
- Come prepared with a brief (one-page) position paper that summarizes your points with facts, and leave it with the legislator or staff aide. If a lengthier document or answers to questions are relevant, send them later with a thank-you note.
- To gain a favorable vote, follow up with letter(s) and calls to your legislators and their key staff advisors at appropriate points as the issue progresses.
- Maintain the relationship. Get your name on legislative mailing lists. Find occasions to see your legislators again in appropriate circumstances, and write to them on the issues from time to time. If you obtain reports or data that will be useful to legislators and their aides and that you can share with them, send those documents with a brief personal cover note. Eventually, you may even find policymakers coming to you for information, help, or your point of view on new issues.

The advice on this document has been copied and/or adapted from:

National League Nursing

<http://www.nln.org/docs/default-source/advocacy-public-policy/building-relationships-with-your-legislators-pdf.pdf?sfvrsn=0>

and the America Academy of Family Physicians legislative action center the AAFP's legislative action center (www.aafp.org/)*

Florida Senate Website: <https://www.flsenate.gov/About/EffectiveCommunication>