

**Advocacy Tips  
For Meetings with Elected Officials**

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1. If possible, meet, or at least request meetings, with all the members of an elected body, even if you feel some will never agree with you or that you do not need their vote. They will appreciate the courtesy, and you will learn something from them.
2. Learn about the official in advance.
  - a. What other jobs has she held?
  - b. Where does she live?
  - c. What accomplishments is she proud of?
  - d. What is her personal style (i.e., formal, informal)
  - e. On what committees does she serve?
  - f. Who are her allies and opponents?
3. Learn to know the staff by name and develop relationships with them.
4. Formulate specific goals for the meeting: what kind of commitment do you want to leave with?
5. Specify the length of the meeting you are requesting. Remember that the official may be running late, so that the meeting may not begin on time.
6. Make sure the official knows everyone that will be at the meeting. If you want to bring someone not originally specified, let the official know in advance.
7. Send a short memo or letter in advance with your main points. Bring copies of it with you, and do not expect that the official will have had time to read it yet.
8. If you are not a constituent, try to bring a constituent with you, ideally one directly affected by your issue.
9. If constituents cannot be there in person, try to gather stories from them.
10. A real story that illustrates your points is generally more powerful than a well-reasoned argument.
11. Think about what you have to offer:
  - a. The chance to sponsor or co-sponsor a bill
  - b. A favorable press opportunity

- c. Good community relations
- d. Research
- e. Coalition building

12. Think about what the official has to offer:

- a. Holding public hearings
- b. Lobbying her colleagues
- c. Bringing governmental staff together to work with you
- d. Getting press attention
- e. Convening meetings, networking

13. Ask the official for advice. Do not lecture. If possible, give her a chance to help shape your initiative and take a degree of ownership.

14. Be polite and do not burn bridges.

15. Try not to end the meeting without a clear understanding of commitments and next steps.

16. Write a thank you letter that confirms your understanding very clearly.