



Personal visits with a legislator are the most effective method of advocating your issue. Use the following guide to help you make your visit a success.

Advocate's Guide to Personal Visits with Legislators

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| Before the Visit | |
| 1. | Call the legislator's office. The best opportunity to set up a meeting is during a legislative recess. If the legislator is unable to meet, ask to meet with their staff person handling the issue. |
| 2. | Make an appointment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State the name and or number of the bill or issue and your position. • State your attendees' names, addresses, and affiliations. Notify the office in advance of any changes in this list. • Confirm the meeting date, time, attendees, purpose, and background in writing. |
| 3. | Prepare for the meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan on the meeting lasting between 15-30 minutes. • Develop a one-page position paper and make copies to distribute at your meeting. • Educate yourself about the official – their background, political philosophy and the number of community associations in their district. • Develop 2-3 key points that you want to convey to the legislator. Use layperson's terms and personal experiences to make your points. • Consider what questions may be asked and develop concise answers to those questions. |
| 4. | Be flexible. Legislator's schedules often changed due to urgent meetings, hearings or votes so your meeting may be canceled or delayed. You can always ask to meet with a staff person responsible for the issue. |
| During the Visit | |
| 1. | Arrive 5-10 minutes prior to the meeting. |
| 2. | Briefly introduce yourself and other attendees. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let the legislator know how many individuals reside in your association(s). • Mention that you are a constituent and CAI member. |
| 3. | Clearly explain your issue. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use layperson's terms. • Use personal experience to describe how the issue affects you or your community. • Do not read from your position paper. |
| 4. | Ask if the legislator has any questions. Then ask directly for his or her support. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay attention to the response. He or she might be talking with several groups about the issue to determine their position. • Never argue or act combative with the legislator or staff person. |
| 5. | Thank the legislator or staff member for his or her time. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sum up any commitments made by the legislator. • Offer to provide further information or a meeting with other residents. • Leave your written position paper. |
| After the Visit | |
| 1. | Write a personal thank you note to the legislator and any staff with whom you met. Briefly restate your position and include any additional information that may have been requested. Provide a summary of your understanding of the outcome of the meeting. |
| 2. | Maintain contact with the legislator as the issue progresses. Continue to provide feedback or input to remind the legislator or staff person of your ongoing interest in the issue. |