

LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY 101

Before You Start - What Makes an Effective Legislative Advocate?

Effective Advocates are:

- Well informed regarding their subject and armed with information supporting their goals
- Knowledgeable about the legislator, their goals, district, and constituency
- Resourceful and collaborative
- Quietly persistent
- Sincere
- Respectful of others' point of view
- Politically aware
- Tactful
- Enthusiastic
- Focused and clear about what they want

Before You Start - Build a Relationship with Your Legislator

- Know your legislator and his or her staff (Chief of Staff; Legislative Assistant; District Director, Committee Staff)
- Request a newsletter, and sign-up for e-mail alerts from your legislators
- Follow them across social media platforms
- Understand the issues important to your Legislator
- Know what your Legislators are looking for
- Recognize them, in public and in private, for efforts to help with your issue

Before You Start - Getting Ready

- Do your homework
- Understand your issue and why it is important
- Be able to articulate the problem that you are trying to solve
- Know your history – Is this a new issue? Has the issue been debated before?
- Know who supports your issue and who opposes your issue
- What governmental level (federal, state, local) is relevant to your issue
- Know who your allies are and whether they will help you in this effort
- Strategize with your group about who will start the conversation once you meet your legislator

Before You Start – Where Can You Find Them

- <http://findyourrep.legislature.ca.gov>

- Capitol Office (check to make sure that he/she will be in the Capitol)
- District Office (check to make sure that he/she will be in the district)
- Fundraisers
- Public meetings/Town Halls
- Social media

Meeting Your Legislator – Starting the Meeting

- Introduce yourself
- Mention something that you have learned about their background
- Mention a personal connection, or a time when you previously met
- Be as gracious and respectful to a legislative staffer as you would be to a legislator
- Be positive
- Be brief – don't use up all your time in introductory conversation

Meeting Your Legislator – In the Weeds

- Start with your conclusion / position / recommendation
- Don't overwhelm them with paper – have a simple summary "leave-with" document
- Use easy to read charts if a visual will help
- Make it compelling – let your passion for the issue show
- Tell a personal story, if you have one
- Bring your arguments home to the legislator's district
- Make sure your facts are accurate
- Be prepared for questions, especially from the opposing viewpoint

Meeting Your Legislator – Closing the Deal

- Make your specific request / position – Do you want support? Do you want them to oppose a policy?
- Offer a solution to the issue you are advocating on
- Ask for a specific response – if they tell you they will look into it, ask if you can call them in a few days to follow up
- Ask for advice on how you should proceed
- Be alert to cues regarding timing, apparent interest, level of understanding, etc.
- Offer to be a resource and to be available to answer questions about programs in the future
- Invite them to your program, or to an advisory board meeting, anytime they are in the district
- Thank them for their time and attention

After Meeting Your Legislator

- If you promise additional information, be sure to send it.
- Follow-up by sending a thank you letter to the legislator and/or staffer for their time and consideration - even if they didn't agree with you!
- Share information about the visit with your Legislative Committee Chairs and/or your Legislative Advocate