

Ten Rules for Engagement

1. **All Politics Is Local.** All elected officials are interested in addressing the needs of their constituents. Be sure they know how your museum is serving—and supported by—the community.
2. **Remember Your Manners.** Always say please and thank you. Thank legislators and staff for taking the time to meet with you and to listen to your story and your concerns. Always thank them for their help in securing local, state, or federal grants or other relevant support.
3. **The Squeaky Wheel Gets the Grease.** Those speaking up for their issues get attention. If you do not ask, people will not know the issue is important to constituents. Do not be afraid to make your case!
4. **To Change Public Policy, Take the Long View.** Public policy changes are often incremental and dramatic policy shifts take time. It took nearly 10 years for The Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids to get Congress to prohibit the advertising of tobacco products to kids. We're in it for the long haul.
5. **Politicians Are People Too.** They have hobbies, families, and favorite causes. By learning about them as people, you might find new ways to build a relationship.
6. **Tell the Truth.** Do not make things up. Share the facts, even if they might hurt your case. You need to maintain your credibility as a trusted source for information.
7. **Treat the Staff with Respect.** The staff of elected officials are a valuable part of the team. They advise the legislator and work hard for little pay. They can be a great internal champion for your cause and, someday, they may run for office themselves.
8. **Make Advocacy a Habit.** Don't rely on one visit a year to make the case for your institution. Keep in touch with your elected officials and their staff all year long. Invite them to visit your museum and make sure they are on your mailing list and media lists. Connect with them on social media.
9. **Reward Good Work.** If your elected officials do good things for your museum, tell everyone. Put it in your newsletter, honor them at your next event and share it with the media and on social media.
10. **You Can Make a Difference and Ask Others to Help.** Volunteers, visitors, teachers, and supporters can all support your advocacy efforts. Trustees can be especially important in this area. Get started by putting advocacy on your museum's next board meeting agenda and engage the staff in advocacy.