

10 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 you or your museum is serving—and is valued by—your community.

2. Remember Your Manners.

Always say “please” and “thank you.” Thank legislators and staff for taking the time to meet with you and hear your story and your current concerns. Always thank them for their help in securing local, state, or federal grants or other relevant support of the field.

3. Those Who Speak Up, Make a Difference.

Speaking up gets your issues on the radar. If you do not share your story, legislators will not know what matters to constituents like you. Make your case!

4. To Change Public Policy, Take the Long View.

Public policy changes are often incremental and dramatic policy shifts take time. The status quo (current funding or support) is never guaranteed. We must cultivate legislator support and stakeholder education over time. We're in it for the long haul.

5. Politicians Are People Too.

Legislators and staff have hobbies, families, and favorite causes just like you. By learning about them as people, you can identify ways to build a relationship and rapport.

6. Tell the Truth.

Do not make things up. Share the facts accurately, even if they might not help your case directly. It's important to maintain your credibility as a trusted resource and source of information.

7. Treat the Staff with Respect.

The staff of elected officials are a uniquely valuable part of the team. They advise the legislator and are dedicated to public service work. They can be a great internal champion for your cause, and they may run for and hold public office themselves someday.

8. Make Advocacy a Habit.

Don't rely on one meeting a year to make the case for you or your institution. Keep in touch with your elected officials and their staff all year long. Invite them to visit your museum, make sure they are on your mailing list and media lists, and 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 advocates. Get started by putting advocacy on your museum's next board meeting agenda and engaging your staff in advocacy. See AAM's [Trustee Resource Center](#) to learn more about engaging your board in advocacy today!