

Tips for Meeting with Elected Officials

Whether meeting with legislators and their staff in-person or virtually, there are best practices to help ensure your meeting is effective. Here are some tips for making your case with elected officials and their staff.

Find additional advocacy resources on the Alliance's website at aam-us.org/advocacy/resources.

Be informed and do your homework. Read newsletters and advocacy alerts about issues carefully. Understand both sides of issues. Whenever possible, know when a bill is in committee, when hearings will be held and who the cosponsors are. Follow your legislators' newsletters, press releases and social media so you are informed about their interests, priorities, and their events you may be able to participate in.

Be concise and compelling. The more simply and clearly you can share your position, story, and data, the better chance you have that elected officials and their staff members will take note and take action.

Be specific. Know your "ask" and be ready to make it. Offices expect you to make an ask. Do you want the legislator to draft legislation, propose an amendment, vote for a specific bill, comment on an issue?

Be honest. Do not exaggerate to make a point or answer a question if you are not sure of the facts. Make plans to follow up later with answers to specific questions and follow through with that information.

Share personal examples. Your passion is your advocacy super-power. Sharing your story about your work, and the impact of current events on you and your work, puts the issues in memorable, human terms. Personal stories from constituents can have great influence on legislators and their staff members.

Practice your visit. Practice makes perfect and each meeting is unique. Hone your message by practicing with friends or colleagues before you meet with a legislator or their staff.

Be courteous, but firm and confident. Remember you have a right and duty to communicate with your elected officials. Your passion and conviction for your work and your cause is an asset in your advocacy.

Do not argue with legislators or make threats. If it is clear that they will not support your position, just share the facts and ask them to consider your viewpoint. Even if you disagree, you always want to keep the lines of communication open for discussing future issues with legislators and their staff members.

Follow up. After you meet with an elected official or their staff, write a thank you note reminding them of the issues you discussed, sharing an invitation to an upcoming event or activity, and providing any follow-up material you promised during the meeting to reaffirm that you are a resource for them in the community.