

EIGHT TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL ADVOCACY VISIT IN OLYMPIA

Meeting with elected officials or their staff and developing a personal relationship is one of the most effective ways to influence their position on an issue. Phone calls, emails, and letters are all important, but meeting in person can help build your relationship and be more personal.

1. **Make an appointment.** Schedule your visit in advance, don't just show up! You may end up meeting with staff. Don't be discouraged – they know the legislators well and in many cases meeting with staff can prove to be equally or more effective. Call or email your legislator's office. You can find phone numbers and email addresses for legislators and their legislative assistants [here](#). If you're not sure who your elected officials are, you can [find your district here](#). Be sure to follow up to confirm your request.
2. **Prepare for the lobby visit.** Information on your Legislator's co-sponsorship of bills is available for [House](#) and [Senate](#) (click "Details" then "Bill Sponsorship"). If meeting in a group, have a pre-meeting to determine who will cover which points, take notes, and "chair" the meeting to keep it on topic and on time. These meetings are generally less than 15 minutes long, so be prepared for a quick pitch.
3. **Be punctual and positive.** Be on time and thank the person you're meeting with for their time. Even if you disagree on most issues, compliment the legislator for a vote or action that you appreciated.
4. **Focus the meeting.** Briefly introduce everyone in your group, the organization you represent, and the topic you wish to discuss. It is important to talk about only one issue and to stay on topic. *Check out ["Developing Effective Messages"](#) for more.*
5. **Listen and gather information.** Ask for your legislator's view on an issue. Be patient and passionate; don't react angrily if you don't get the response you want. Remain polite.
6. **Make a specific request.** Rather than something vague like "I want you to support the environment," a more effective "ask" is to request action for a specific bill: "I would like Senator Doe to vote yes on SB 5678, the Tree Planting Act." Give several points on why they should support this legislation and why it's important to the district they represent. Avoid a long moral debate about the issue; be concrete.
7. **Follow up.** Tell the Legislator or staff that you will get back to them if you can't provide information on the spot. If the staff person is unfamiliar with a bill or is unsure of the Legislator's position, ask for follow-up correspondence. Leave one or two pages of relevant material with your contact information.
8. **Express your thanks.** At the end of the meeting, thank the person or people you met with for their time. Send a thank you letter soon after your visit, repeating your "ask." This helps to build a relationship over time!