

MEETING WITH YOUR LEGISLATOR DURING THE INTERIM

Personal visits are a highly-effective way of helping legislators understand your position on an issue or program. Legislators welcome visits from their constituents! When the Legislature is not in session (also known as “Interim”), legislators are more available and are better able to keep appointments, so visits during this time are vital.

Residents of Washington have three state legislators. One State Senator and two State Representatives represent each of the 49 districts in Washington. Generally, they represent fairly small geographic areas (smaller than federal congressional districts) and want to get to know the people and programs in the district they represent. If you do not know who your legislators are, you can look them up at <http://app.leg.wa.gov/DistrictFinder> or call the [Legislative hotline](#) for assistance at 1-800-562-6000.

To schedule a meeting, contact Faith Action Network! We can help you set it up, prepare, and gather a group from your district to attend together. Otherwise you can email your legislator and work with staff to get your meeting set. Flexibility is important when scheduling appointments with legislators. Be prepared for schedule changes!

Tips for Planning Your Meeting:

Scheduling the Meeting —

- Be flexible! Negotiate a time and location that works well for them. By being flexible on the time and location, you will seem more reasonable and have a better chance of getting a meeting.
- Make your appointment well in advance if possible.
- Be prepared for delays, reschedules, or cancellations, and don't take it personally!

Preparing for the Meeting —

- Prepare well! Know your [key message](#) and prepare any materials you may bring.
- Know who you are meeting with and their prior exposure to the issue(s) you are going to discuss.
 - Research their background to determine what questions they may ask.
- What is your plan of action for the meeting? What is your “ask”?
- If you are part of a large group, decide who will do the talking.

At the Beginning of the Meeting —

- Arrive early, be prepared, dress nicely, be polite, and keep it brief.
- Introduce yourself and your group at the beginning of the meeting. State who you are, if you represent a group or coalition, what you want to discuss, and what you want your legislator to do.
- Gauge the legislator's familiarity with your issue, because they might not be an expert! Legislators have to make decisions on many different matters and may specialize in areas unrelated to your work. Avoid overwhelming the legislator with too much information or detail, but make sure they understand.

During the Meeting –

- Find out where your legislator stands on your issue(s).
 - Are they being polite, but non-committal? Try asking if they would be willing to read additional information about your issue. You can send more information in a follow-up email!
 - Somewhat interested? Ask them to come out to your program for a site visit!
 - Interested in learning more? Invite them to meet informally with a few others who know the issue well (clients, specialists, policy analysts, program directors, etc.) to continue the conversation.
 - On-board with the issue? You might ask them if they would be willing to share information with other members of their caucus or committees.
 - In opposition to your issue? Find out why. What are their concerns? Find out if there are compromises they might be willing to make, or what it would take for them to support the issue.
- Perhaps the most critical part of your visit – request action! Ask your legislator for some sort of commitment, some way that they could help the issue, e.g. sponsoring a bill next session.
- Leave behind a one-page fact sheet summarizing your points. Include your name, your address, the group or program you represent, important facts or stories, citations or support for where you found your information, and your contact information (phone number and email address).
- Try to leave the meeting knowing what your next steps are (e.g. calling their office to set up a site visit, organizing a small informal meeting, providing additional information, answering more questions, etc.).
- No matter what the next step is, *you must be sure to follow-up with them!*

After the Meeting—

- Follow up the meeting with a thank-you note or email, thanking the legislator for their time. Be sure to re-state your position in this note.
- Follow through with any “next steps” you may have determined at your meeting.
- If the legislator asks for more information, please get this information to them! If they asked you a question that you did not know the answer to, do some research to find the answer and then include this with your follow up after the meeting.
- If you need help responding to questions or with any other steps, call or email Faith Action Network at 206-625-9790 or fan@fanwa.org.

FAITH ACTION NETWORK

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