

Advocacy Do's and Don'ts

Do Be on time and prepared.

Allow extra time to get through security and find the room.

Do Be prepared to meet with a staff member.

Staffers are the experts who work closely with the elected officials and track constituent input on issues, so these meetings can be quite meaningful.

Do Identify constituents in the group.

Do Practice what you want to discuss with the decision maker in advance.

Do Stay on message. Stick to your key talking points and ask specific questions.

Do Debrief with your delegation afterwards.

Do Share personal stories to help convey your message.

Do Admit if you do not have an answer to a question.

Write the question down and offer to follow up later.

Do Leave materials on the issues you spoke about with your elected officials or their staff.

Do Thank whomever you meet at the beginning of your visit and at the end.

Do Follow up the meeting with a thank you note, briefly re-stating your “asks.”



Advocacy Do's and Don'ts

Don't Argue with your legislator or their staffer.

Make your points politely and stay on message. If needed, agree to disagree.

Don't Try to introduce everyone if you have a large group (10+ people). Instead, say where in the district/state your delegates live.

Don't Get off message.

Keep to the issues you've agreed to discuss. Do not add in your own personal issue – it will dilute the effectiveness of your advocacy.

Don't Allow the person you are meeting with to shift the meeting to issues that you did not come to discuss. Thank him or her politely for sharing, but take charge by offering, “we are here to discuss...”

Don't Be intimidated by your legislators. As a constituent, you have every right to be there, to educate on your views and attempt to persuade your elected officials.

Don't Allow any one speaker or issue to take up all of the time (you might only have 15 minutes). Watch the clock and be prepared to ask if you may move on to another issue.

Don't Make commitments on behalf of your group that you haven't discussed beforehand. Tell the person you are meeting with that you or a Washington staff member will get back to him or her.

