

- needed, a request for specific action and the reasons for it should also be included.
- If possible, have high profile supporters send strong letters expressing their point of view before your meeting takes place. "Dear Colleague" letters, written by elected officials and directed to their fellow legislators, are also effective and should be sent prior to your meeting or at least be included in your information packet.

Step 3: During the Visit (Arrive on time, even a little early).

- When visiting your legislator, assemble a delegation which represents a broad base of her/his constituency. It's always good to have an "odd-couple" -- a person representing a group that is not usually affiliated with another organization represented e.g. parents from LDA and the Arc.
- Be on time, positive, friendly. Know your agenda and stick to your message. Don't assume the legislator is familiar with the details of the issue/bill. Take notes during the visit which will provide a written summary. Be alert to staff members assigned to work in this area.
- Make your presentation simple and straightforward. You may have only 5 or 10 minutes left by the time you get through with introductions and pleasantries. When visiting your legislator, prepare two sets of remarks: One that is 15 minutes, the other that is 90 seconds long. That way you will be prepared if she/he is called out of the office in the middle of your visit.
- Because it was you who arranged the visit, legislators will expect that you start the discussion. One format for discussion follows a simple outline:
- Create an Open Climate.
 - Begin the visit by introducing yourselves and thanking the legislator for meeting with you as well as for some favorable position they have already taken (if there is one).
 - Present your Message.
 - OPEN the discussion by framing the issue on your terms;
 - EXPLORE the issue by taking a position and identifying any relevant legislation;
 - SUPPORT your position by explaining why such a measure is good public policy;
 - APPLY the policy to real lives by making clear how the legislation affects people in the legislator's district. Anecdotal evidence of how you will be personally affected can also be very moving. A few, memorable statistics can further emphasize your point. When possible show that the issue affects the legislator's committee assignments. Also, be sure to cite any significant support within the district.
- Make a Specific Request for Legislative Action.
 - A specific request for legislative action will allow you to control the meeting. You have now set the agenda. If attempts are made to divert discussion, simply, and politely, return to your issue. Finally, if the legislator seems supportive, seek a commitment. If the legislator remains opposed, ask her or him to keep an open mind and remain neutral.
- Be responsive to your legislators questions. If you don't know the answer to a question, don't fake it or bluff. Say "I don't know, but I'll get back to you on it." Then DO IT.