

How to Visit a Policymaker *Taken from Connecticut Health Policy*

http://www.cthealthpolicy.org/toolbox/legislative/visiting_policymaker.htm

Meeting face-to-face with a policymaker allows you to fully explain your concerns, allows them to ask questions and develops a better understanding of the issue for both of you. It is also an important part of developing relationships into the future.

- Call their office to ask for an appointment. Leave a number where you can be reached.
- Choose a convenient place where you can talk without being interrupted - e.g. a school, library, their office. Be sure you and they have directions and know where to park.
- Let them know what issues you want to discuss.
- Learn what you can about the official - previous votes and actions on your issues, committee assignments, professional background, any public statements on your issue.
- You can take one or two other people with you, but it isn't necessary. Keep the group small.
- Prepare for the visit - define your goal, brief yourselves on the issue, plan what you want to say, even practice with a friend.
- Bring a fact sheet to leave with them, preferably one page. The sheet should contain your most important points, what you want them to do, and your contact information. Be sure to leave your contact information - name, address, phone and email (if available).
- Arrive on time but understand that they may not be. Be patient and understanding.
- Introduce yourselves - describe your interest in the issue, any organization you are representing. If you are a constituent say so.
- Be friendly and courteous. A little small talk is fine, but get to the point. Be respectful of their time.
- Say your piece, but be sure to listen to what they have to say. You can disagree politely, but don't argue or interrupt.
- Be sure to remember the point of the meeting - what it is you want them to do.
- They may ask a question that you don't know the answer to. It happens to everyone - you can't know everything about any issue. Don't make one up. (You almost always get caught.) Say that you don't know, but you will get back to them.
- Get back to them. If it is taking you a long time to find the answer, call to let them know that you are still working on it.
- If by mistake, you say something that you later find out wasn't right - call right away and correct the error.
- Send a follow up thank you note - It doesn't have to be long. Handwritten is best, but typed is fine. It should be signed by everyone who visited, but don't wait too long to get signatures. Include your contact information again and a copy of any materials or fact sheets you left with him or her.