

How to meet with a lawmaker

Effective communication is essential at all stages—**before**, **during**, and **after** meetings with lawmakers. It is crucial to balance the requirements of the lawmaker's office with strategies that effectively drive your planned objectives. Additionally, regular follow-up is key to sustaining a lasting and fruitful partnership.

1 How to prepare before your meeting with a lawmaker

Keys to successful conversations

- **Geographic Tie:** Begin by establishing your connection to the legislative district and expressing gratitude for their efforts.
- **Issue Relevance:** Briefly describe how the member is related to the issue in a single sentence.
- **Timeliness:** Explain the importance of the issue at this moment, such as an imminent vote or relevant current events, in one sentence.
- **Further Information:** Narrate your story and the action you advocate for, offering additional information where necessary.
- **Ongoing Engagement:** Mention any future interactions planned with your contacts.
- **Reference Legislation:** If addressing a particular piece of legislation, include the bill number, title, and subject matter.
- **Prepare your ask in advance:** Be ready to respectfully request the legislator's support on the issue and thank them for his/her time and consideration.

Know your Lawmaker

Personality:

- Familiarize yourself with the lawmaker's appearance to ensure you recognize them in person.
- Know their political party and how it may influence their stance on various issues, which can guide the tone and content of your discussion.

Issue:

- Investigate their past and current positions on the issue you are addressing. This knowledge allows you to tailor your arguments to resonate with their established views.
- Look into their voting record to gain insight into their legislative priorities and how they might align with your objectives.

2 What to do during your meeting with a lawmaker

Centering the Human Element in Your Advocacy

Highlight your personal story behind your advocacy, prioritizing the human element over purely economic arguments first. Connecting your cause to real-life experiences not only humanizes your case but also equips lawmakers with relatable narratives for speeches and media engagements.

Refining Your Message and Leveraging Data

Simplify your presentation by outlining your introduction, key points, and ultimate goals (such as funding). Follow up this overview with more comprehensive details. Arm yourself with solid data and statistics to substantiate your assertions; while personal stories capture attention, hard data provides a clear picture of the broader implications as you close your conversation.

Tips to keep in mind for in-person meetings



Be on time: Arrive no more than 5 minutes before the meeting is set to begin. On average, a meeting lasts 15 minutes and should not exceed 30. Be prepared for potential last minute schedule adjustments.



Be understanding: Prepare to meet with either the member or the member's staff and treat both with equal respect; continue the meeting as usual if the member arrives in the middle of your meeting.



Stay on topic: Keep the meeting focused and persuasive; only discuss issues that you outlined in the agenda sent to the member and/or the member's staff.



Maintain a focus on the issues: Honor the member's political beliefs and party associations by keeping the conversation strictly about the matter at hand.

3 Steps to take after your meeting with a lawmaker

Post-meeting actions

Be sure to follow up with a gratitude email: Express appreciation to the member and/or their aide for the meeting, provide a brief recap of the discussed topic for their records, and attach credible details pertaining to the issue for their perusal.

Maintain communication: Keep the lines open without inundating them; share pertinent updates or fresh insights as they come to light.

“Building a strong relationship with a lawmaker is like nurturing a plant—it grows best with consistent attention, not just when you need something. Keeping in touch throughout the year shows genuine commitment and ensures that your voice is part of the ongoing conversation. And when there's progress or success in the community, sharing your gratitude is the sunshine that helps that relationship thrive

JEREMY REUTER
DIRECTOR OF STATEWIDE ADVOCACY

Helpful content to bring to your meeting

Provide succinct one-page summaries and 'leave-behind' documents from Spartan Advocate.

Emphasize the transmission of digital documents, crafting brief and focused materials, and prioritizing substance in the content provided.

Remember to incorporate the informative one-pagers by Spartan Advocate and the data-rich sheets from Mi Spartan Impact.

Are you comfortable on social media?



Follow and interact with legislators on social media to stay informed about their activities and viewpoints, and use these platforms to participate in relevant discussions, highlighting your issues in a public, yet respectful, manner.



Use social media to share your cause, tagging or mentioning legislators to draw their attention to your issues, and encourage followers to do the same, thereby increasing visibility and the potential for legislative engagement.