Advocates for Ohio’s Future

Building Relationships with Ohio Legislators
Overview

1. One-on-one visits
2. Where do I go for help with...?
3. Testimony at public hearings
4. General do’s and don’ts
One-on-One Meetings

- Meeting face-to-face with legislator or staff is most effective advocacy tool
- Not an imposition
- Opportunity for both parties - legislators depend on you
- 4 easy steps
Step 1
Arranging the Visit

- Schedule 2-3 weeks ahead
- Ask for 30 minutes; expect 10
- Explain reason for visit
- Meeting with staff good alternative
- Confirm visit by letter or email
Step 2
Preparation for the Visit

• Group visits: United front
• Facts and figures in moderation
• Research the legislator
• Information packet
• High-profile supporters
Step 3  
During the Visit

- Arrive a little early
- Be positive and friendly
- Stick to your message
- Make no assumptions
- Take notes
- Collect staff contact information
- KISS
- Control the conversation
Messaging
Effective Message Communication

- Open climate
- Point to common ground
- Present message
- Frame issues on your terms
- Take a position
- Support your position
- Apply request to local needs
Messaging

Effective Message Communication

• Make a specific request
• Seek commitment
• Be responsive to questions
• Don’t overreact
• Seek compromise
• Don’t overstay welcome
• Opportunity for follow-up
Outline/Script for Legislative Visit

- Introductions (“I live in your district”)
- Personal connection: (“Thank you for supporting...”)
- AOF/organizational “elevator speech”
- Short story to illustrate the need
- The problem
- The ask (“Will you support/oppose...”)
- Discussion - remember to listen!
- Follow-up
Step 4
Following the Visit

- Debrief as a group
- Follow-up increases effectiveness
- Thank-you note
Where Do I Go for Help with . . . ?

• Finding out who my legislators are?
  ➢ www.house.state.oh.us
  ➢ www.ohiosenate.gov

• Finding proposed laws?
  ➢ www.legislature.state.oh.us

• Finding AOF materials?
  ➢ www.advocatesforohio.org/resources
Testifying at Committee Hearings

- Arrive early and sign in
- Bring written copies of testimony
- Identify yourself and your organization
- State position early in testimony
- Don’t be redundant
Testifying at Committee Hearings

- Agree/disagree with previous speakers
- Limit to 10 minutes
- Provide source of any facts given
- Maintain composure
- Speak directly to committee
- End on positive note if possible
- Be prepared for questions
## Do’s and Don’ts

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<tr>
<th><strong>DO</strong></th>
<th><strong>DON’T</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>• Know the legislator’s name and district</td>
<td>• Allow the legislator to move discussion away from your issue</td>
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<td>• Get to know the legislator’s staff, keeping them informed</td>
<td>• Be drawn into discussion of other issues</td>
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<td>• Know the name, number, and status of your bill</td>
<td>• Take a threatening, condescending, or confrontational tone with legislators</td>
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<td>• Dress appropriately and maintain courtesy</td>
<td>• Surprise or embarrass a legislator</td>
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<td>• Shake hands and maintain eye contact</td>
<td>• Misrepresent any information about your bill or support for it</td>
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<td>• Make an appointment if possible</td>
<td>• Threaten to defeat legislators in future elections</td>
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<td>• Expect the legislator to be friendly</td>
<td>• Be drawn into ideological (or theological) arguments</td>
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<td>• Expect the legislator to be busy and frequently interrupted</td>
<td>• Overwhelm the legislator with lengthy materials</td>
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<td>• Commend the legislator for actions you approve</td>
<td>• Answer questions if you do not have sufficient information</td>
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<td>• Inform the legislator of other interest groups that support your bill</td>
<td>• Give a knee-jerk response to negative, unfriendly comments</td>
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<td>• Meet individual legislators in groups of no more than two or three</td>
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<td>• Present your views firmly and without apology</td>
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<td>• Present clear, concise, focused arguments that support your bill</td>
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<td>• Buy the legislator a car</td>
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<td>• Give them a paper bag full of large bills</td>
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<td>• Leave your cell phone on during the meeting</td>
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Contact Us

Advocates for Ohio’s Future

www.advocatesforohio.org
510 East Mound Street, Suite 200
Columbus, OH 43215
Fax: (614) 228-5150

Will Petrik
Outreach Director
wpetrik@advocatesforohio.org
614-602-2464

Scott Britton
Coordinator
sbritton@advocatesforohio.org
614-602-2463