

Legislative Advocacy “DOs” AND “DON’Ts”

Adapted from American Public Health Association

DO

1. Do learn legislators' committee assignments and where their specialties lie.
2. Do present the need for what you are asking the legislator to do. Use data or cases you know.
3. Do relate situations in his/her home district.
4. Do ask the legislator's position and how s/he has formulated it.
5. Do ask why s/he voted a particular way.
6. Do show openness to the knowledge of counterarguments and respond to them.
7. Do admit you do not know. Offer to try to find out the answer and send information back to the office.
8. Do spend time with legislators whose position is against yours. You can lessen the intensity of the opposition and perhaps change it.
9. Do spend time in developing relationships with legislators staff.
10. Do thank them for stands the legislator has taken which you support.

DON'T

1. Do not overload a legislative visit with too many issues.
2. Do not confront, threaten, pressure or beg.
3. Do not be argumentative. Speak with calmness and commitment so as not to put him/her on the defensive.
4. Do not overstate the case. Members are very busy and you are apt to lose their attention if you are too wordy.
5. Do not expect legislators to be specialists. Their schedules and workloads tend to make them generalists.
6. Do not be put off by smokescreens or long-winded answers. Bring the legislators back to the point. Maintain control of the meetings.
7. Don't make promises you can't deliver.
8. Don't be afraid to take a stand on the issues.
9. Don't shy away from meetings with legislators with known views opposite your own.
10. Don't be offended if a legislator is unable to meet and requests that you meet with his/her staff.