



How to meet with your elected official

Meeting with your elected official is one of the most powerful and effective actions you can take as a citizen. (Writing and calling them are also extremely valuable.)

How to meet with your elected official



Request a meeting

- To meet with your elected official, you do not need to be a representative of an organization or have any official position. If you are a constituent, or a person who lives in the riding, you have the right to request a meeting.
- Look up your elected official's constituency office.
- Make your request in writing. Be sure to include:
 - that you are a constituent or live in the riding;
 - the names of any individuals who plan to accompany you to the meeting. (Some officials put a cap on the number they allow.)
 - request for times that might be available while informing the official's office when you are absolutely not available. (This aids with efficiency of arrangements.)
 - what issue(s) you want to discuss, and if there is a specific piece of legislation attached, include the bill number.
- Follow up with a call to the office if you do not receive a response in a reasonable amount of time.



Prepare for your meeting

- Why do you want to meet with this elected official?
- Decide on the (top three) messages that you want to get across.
- Decide what you want to achieve from the meeting. What do you want your elected official to commit to? Be specific.
- Prepare your talking points after any needed research.
- Prepare a one-page summary of your talking points to leave with your elected official. (If they miss anything you have said, or will be getting back to you, this way the official and the office staff have a record of your concerns.) You can also bring other materials that may complement the discussion.
- Decide who you want to bring with you, and make sure you are all on the same page and equally prepared.
- Be prepared for an elected official who tries to 'take over' the meeting (rather than being a good listener.) Have strategies for politely 'taking back' the meeting because your time will be limited.



At the meeting

- Be on time, polite, respectful, and patient. Elected officials are busy people and might be running a bit late.
- Be personal. Make the issue your own. Share a personal connection or experience that makes it clear why this issue is important to you as a constituent. But be brief and to the point.
- Use local examples if you can.
- Stay focused. You probably have 20 minutes or less for your meeting, and you want to be able to cover all your key points.
- It is okay if you do not know all the answers to questions asked. You do not have to be an expert. You can say: "I don't know. I am still learning."
- Be explicit when you ask for a commitment to the action you are seeking. If the official is unable to tell you at the meeting, ask: "When may I expect to hear back from you?"



After the meeting

- Leave your handouts and information with them for reference.
- Make a plan to follow up on any commitments the elected official has made.
- No matter the outcome of the meeting, be sure to follow up with a brief Thank you email to the elected official for meeting with and include appreciation to office staff personnel as well.



Other tips:

- Remember elected officials are unique individuals – different folks will respond to you differently. Meet them as human beings, and make a connection.
- Office staff can be very helpful in supporting your efforts to meet with the official. Make friends with them!