Tips for meeting with elected officials

• It is easier to meet elected officials in their local district offices where they have more time, rather than in Washington, DC.

• Contact the legislator’s scheduler to arrange an appointment.
  - Introduce yourself, say you are a constituent and explain the purpose of the meeting.
  - Set a meeting date and time. Schedule the meeting for about 15-30 minutes.
  - If your elected official is not available, set the meeting with an appropriate staff person.

• Prepare.
  - Research the legislator’s opinions, and current and past positions on your issue.
  - Prepare simple, to-the-point information that can be used during the meeting and left behind.
  - Prepare your message. Stick to one issue.
  - Know how much time you will have and plan accordingly.
  - Anticipate questions. Write them down. Prepare answers.
  - Bring a notebook and a pen.

• If you are part of a group, assign someone to lead the group and define everyone’s roles.

• Confirm your appointment the day before the meeting.

• Arrive about 10 minutes early.

• Distribute the information you prepared for the meeting and explain your issue, emphasizing how the district could be affected by the issue.

• If the legislator has a history of supporting your issue, acknowledge that and thank him/her. But be ready to quickly move to the “new” aspect you wish to discuss and be clear about the “ask” you are making.

• If the legislator disagrees with you, stand up for yourself and debate the issues, but do not become overly argumentative.

• Remain non-political.

• Keep emphasizing the positives of your viewpoint and be sure to end the meeting on a positive note.

• Thank them for their time and determine next steps.

• Always send a follow-up letter thanking your legislator or their staff members and include any additional information you offered to provide.