

Meeting With Legislators



Here are some suggestions for meeting with your state legislators. The same principles apply for meetings with local and federal officials.

Making the appointment

- For contact information on your senator or representative, go to www.legislature.mi.gov and click on “Legislators.”
- Make contact with the office staff person who schedules appointments. A phone call is preferable, although some offices may also schedule via email.
 - Though it is sometimes possible to make an appointment a day or two before you wish to meet with a legislator, try to schedule appointments one or two weeks in advance.
 - Legislators’ schedules change often. Handle last-minute cancellations with grace, and be prepared to meet with a legislative aide instead.
- When you make the appointment, briefly and clearly state your purpose.

Example: My name is ... from ... and I work with ... in the area of ... I would like to meet briefly with Representative ... when I am in Lansing next Thursday to talk to her (him) about
- Expect that the appointment will be 15 minutes in length, although sometimes a conversation will last longer or an appointment may be shortened because of a sudden caucus or committee meeting.
- If you are unable to schedule a meeting with the legislator at the time you are available, ask if you can speak with a staff member. If this is not possible, at least make a point of stopping by the office during your time in Lansing. This will give you an opportunity to meet someone in the office. It is also possible that schedules change and that you end up meeting with a legislator or staffer.



Preparing for the meeting

- Familiarize yourself concerning the background and interests of the policymaker. What are his or her interests? What are the committee assignments? What kind of contact has this person related to your organization, business or interests?
- If you are meeting to discuss a specific concern, try to compile a one-page or less written summary to leave with the policymaker (and particularly with the legislative staff members).



During the meeting

- Introduce yourself using your personal public value statement, briefly summarizing what you do and why this issue is important to you.
- Be prepared to explain your concern briefly and clearly. Don't argue and don't criticize opponents. Concentrate on how the issue affects you.



After the meeting

- Be sure to follow up after your appointments with a thank-you email and any pertinent materials. You may include a brief note with suggestions for further interaction, information about additional information or both.

How do I find out how my state legislator voted on a particular issue?

- Use the website "Project Vote Smart," (www.votesmart.org), an independent, nonpartisan organization with a website that allows you to easily search for your legislator and his or her voting record by topic area.

