

Conducting a Successful Legislative Visit

Know your legislator - Even if you have met your legislator before, do you really know how they vote on issues or what issues they are interested in? Go to their website, see what committees they serve on, find out what their interests are and their voting history.

Be punctual - If you can't be on time, be early. If you can't make the meeting, don't cancel, do what you can to get someone you trust to go in your place.

Be brief - Be prepared to get only fifteen or so minutes with the legislator, staff or aide. Prepare in advance what you are going to say, if necessary take notes with you.

Be polite - Go around and briefly introduce yourself and a brief one to two sentences as to why you are there. If you are a constituent, make note of that.

Be positive - Thank him/her for their support in the past, if there is no record of support for this issue, find out what other issues they have been supportive of and thank them for that. *"I saw that you voted to implement..., we want to thank you for that, it's so important and vital for our community, especially those who are limited English speaking."*

Make it personal - Politics are local and they are personal. Have a team member share a personal story and it is a personal issue. Use examples. Stay away from broad sweeping examples and get specific.

Have your supporting materials ready - Be sure to have a folder with you. Have talking points that follow along with the folder and encourage them to follow along. This forces them to review what is inside and gain a deeper understanding of your 'ask'. You don't want your resources to be disregarded.

Ask for a commitment or ask when you might be able to have a commitment- If you are meeting with an aide, you probably won't get a commitment at the meeting. Ask the aide when you should follow up for a commitment. If they aren't sure, ask if you can call them in one to two weeks as a follow up. Generally, unless your legislator sits on the committees that deal with your issue, they haven't seen the bill yet and probably won't give you a direct commitment. Ask your legislator when you can follow up for a commitment on the issue. Ask if there is any other information or materials you could provide to help them in their decision.

Thank them for their time- Here is another chance to invite them to learn more about our community and to support the Ohio AAPI Advisory Council.

Don't do all the talking- Nobody likes being in a 'one-way' conversation. Ask questions, listen, and find out what is on their mind. Don't interrupt, wait until they are done and then offer them 'engaged' feedback.

"I hear your concern that this bill might be a burden the AAPI community, but can I give you some examples of how that won't be the case?" (By the way, never respond with *"that's not true"*).

The challenge of meeting with legislative aides- It is highly likely you will be meeting with a legislative aide. Most legislative aides are working on a variety of issues. Frequently newer staff will appreciate any materials you may want to give them as it helps them explain your issue to the legislator.

Sample Script for Conducting a Legislative Visit

Prior to conducting your visit, rehearse what you plan to say. If you are visiting with a group, select someone to be the lead person for your visit. Be sure to have a game plan – know who will say what and make what point. Assign someone to take notes and identify follow-up items.

Introduction

Tell them who you are.

“Thank you for taking the time to visit with us today. My name is _____ and I am here representing (organization).” We are part of a network of Asian American and Pacific Islander leaders here as part of Ohio AAPI Legislative Day to discuss _____ [issue/legislation].”

Purpose of Visit

You are here in response to [issue].

Make a specific request about the issue (e.g. support / oppose the legislation).

If possible, provide a leave-behind folder with information on the issue.

“We would like to speak with you today about [issue of your breakout session/issue of your interest].”

Provide your breakout session fact sheet.

“Here is a fact sheet with more information. I encourage you to follow along the fact sheet as I continue speaking about it. Most individuals. . . . [provide facts and data that the aide or legislator can follow along with]. Today, [name] has a personal story [information] to share.”

Give details about your “personal story” – Why do you care, how did you get involved, and how have you/client/community members been impacted? Leave them with a picture in their minds.

“My name is _____.” [Begin sharing your story] “This is why [issue/legislation] is important for the AAPI community and individuals like myself.”

Ask

Ask for support.

“Are you [or is the legislator] willing to be our advocate?”

Let the representative take a moment to answer.

“We hope you will consider [supporting / opposing] this issue and bills around this issue. Your support will help in [reiterate the purpose of your visit]. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact [workshop leader].”

Leave your contact information, name, and business card

Thank You

“Thank you so much for your concern and interest. We appreciate you meeting with us today.”

Exchange handshakes and a warm smile.