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## **Tips for Meeting with Elected Officials**

**Be informed and do your homework.** Read newsletters and legislative/advocacy alerts about an issue carefully. Understand both sides of the issues. Know when a bill is in committee, when hearings will be held and who the co-sponsors are.

**Be concise.** The more simply and clearly your position can be explained, the better chance you have of getting people to listen and respond.

**Be specific.** Know exactly what you want your legislator to do. Do you want him/her to draft legislation, propose an amendment, vote for a specific bill?

**Be honest.** Do not exaggerate to make a point or answer a question if you are not sure of the facts. You can always follow up later with answers to their specific questions.

**Share personal examples.** This puts the issues in memorable, human terms. In addition, legislators pay most attention to personal letters from their constituents, so it is important that a letter or e-mail express your own views.

**Practice your visit.** Try explaining your position to friends and family or colleagues before you meet with a legislator or their staff.

**Be courteous, but firm and confident.** Remember you have a right and duty to communicate with your elected officials.

**Do not argue with your legislator or make threats.** If it is clear that the person will not support your position, just give the facts and ask him or her to consider your viewpoint. Even if you disagree, you always want to keep the lines of communication open for discussing future issues.

**Follow up.** After you meet with an elected official, write a thank you note and remind them of the issues you discussed and any follow up actions.