

Ten Tips on Speaking with Your Legislator

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The following tips will help you and your organization to achieve credibility and visibility.

1. Call ahead to make your appointment. Request to meet with the representative or senator.
2. Confirm your appointment.
3. Wear professional dress without DKG badges with pins. The pins signal sorority and may distract from your message.
4. Plan to leave materials behind:
 - ▶ File folder labeled with DKG Educators and business card
 - ▶ Chapter, State, or International brochure
 - ▶ Position paper with legislative priorities and talking points
5. Practice your handshake and get feedback.
6. Know your audience, and know how long you have to visit.
7. Write out what you want to say. This will help you stay focused, and you will be able deliver your message better. (*See Quick Fill-in Guide.*) However, do not read your write-up during the meeting. Talk it.
8. Greet the audience and introduce yourself.
 - ▶ Give your name, position, and identify yourself as a constituent or registered voter. State if you are part of or represent a group or organization.
 - ▶ Identify the organization, and use the elevator speech for the organization (to familiarize your audience with the group purposes).
 - ▶ State the purpose of your visit.
 - ▶ Share professional or personal information that makes you an expert on the subject.
9. Tell the audience a brief overview of your comments. (*See Handy Guide.*)
 - ▶ Tell them what you are going to tell them.
 - ▶ Choose three to five points to make, and discuss these items clearly, concisely, and confidently.
 - ▶ Use facts or figures to make your case. Know the bill number and name.
 - ▶ Make a point to use a personal story or anecdote that is often helpful and memorable.
 - ▶ Appeal to the legislator's own experience or background to make a point.
 - ▶ Explain how the legislator's decision will affect your life and others' lives. Include names of other community members who share your views, especially if the legislator's views are different.
 - ▶ Conclude, summarizing your points very briefly. Tell your legislator what you would like done.
 - ▶ If appropriate, ask if he or she has questions.
 - ▶ Ask the legislator if he or she will support or sponsor the bill. Pause and wait for the response.
 - ▶ Offer to serve for expert testimony for hearings.
 - ▶ The legislator is responsible to listen and make decisions based on their constituents' needs.
 - ▶ Write or email or fax a thank you note— preferably to the legislator's district office.
10. Leave a written copy of your comments. (*See template.*)
 - ▶ Keep it one page, if possible, and organize with bullet points for easy reading.
 - ▶ Include contact information (name, address, phone, email)
 - ▶ What you state in writing is as important as what you say.
 - ▶ Listen carefully—learn more about your lawmaker's position and gain insight into how this issue may be playing out in Congress.