

Legislative Visit Tips

- Before the meeting, decide roles and everyone's individual talking points and who will facilitate.
- Roles include a leader, a person to hand over any leave-behind materials, a person to make the "ask" (ex. Can we expect the Member's Aye vote on AB XX)
- The leader's task is to begin each meeting with: 1) Appreciation for the time the individual(s) is giving you. 2) Explain the purpose of the meeting 3) Round of introductions.

Beyond some obvious things, like don't chew gum...here are some other DOs & DON'Ts

- Because CLRJ is a tax-exempt nonprofit under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, we cannot support or oppose any candidate for public office and our meeting must be conducted in a strictly non-partisan manner. It is best to avoid any discussion about the legislator's political plans or campaigns, including votes, contributions or volunteer opportunities.
- Don't be disappointed if your appointment is with a staff person rather than the legislator – staff are critical members of the legislative team, providing the legislator with advice and information on specific issue areas, such as health care or women's issues. Building a strong relationship with staffers can be very productive, especially since they may work for several legislators over time or even run for office themselves one day!
- Be prepared for anything and be gracious! Mistakes in scheduling happen, staffers get called away, offices erupt with unexpected disruptions. If something happens, assume the best intentions and ask what would be convenient for the individual with whom you were meeting. Be mindful that a lot of offices are very small and cannot accommodate a lot of people. Some offices will have multiple groups showing up at the same time. Sometimes you may end up having a meeting in the hallway or crammed into a little office. In these cases, it's best to get straight to the point and keep the meeting short.
- Expect a meeting that's "short and sweet". Fifteen minutes is the normal length of a meeting with legislators and/or staff. Don't take it personally or as a sign that the staffer doesn't care about your issue – just be prepared so that you can get your points across.
- Make sure your team is clear about the points you want to cover in the meeting and who will speak to each point. Make sure constituents get to talk, but remember that every person in the meeting does not have to speak to every point being discussed.
- SHARE SPACE--Be ready to step up or step back. Legislative visits are most effective when several different people share their perspectives on an issue. No one person or organization should dominate the conversation. Think about whether you are someone who usually talks a lot or someone who doesn't talk at all – and be prepared to Step Up or Step Back as needed to make sure everyone gets to participate!
- Do admit you don't know. You can offer to try to find out the answer and send information back to the office. Let CLRJ know if any Legislative offices wanted additional information or resources.
- Wait to talk about your visit until you get back to the CLRJ offices or are away from the legislator's office. You may want to keep some of your opinions private.
- Say thank you. Don't forget to express appreciation for taking the time to meet with you!