

Advancing Disability Policy in an Election Year

Disability Policy Collaboration

DO's and DON'Ts WHEN DEALING WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS

DO

DON'T

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| 1. <u>Make an appointment.</u>

By e-mail, fax or phone.
Confirm the appointment.
Appointments with legislative aides are also very important.
(Ask for the aide responsible for the issue(s) you wish to discuss.) | <u>Arrive unexpectedly and expect to see the official.</u> |
| 2. <u>Be on time for the visit.</u> | <u>Be upset if your Member can't see you personally.</u> |
| 3. <u>Be positive and friendly.</u> | <u>Be confrontational.</u>
(Don't ever threaten or berate the official.) |
| 4. <u>State the reason for your visit.</u>
-Be concise and specific.
-Introduce yourself and identify the group you are representing.
-Briefly describe the issue(s).
-Limit the number of issues to be discussed.
-State your position and recommendation on the issue(s). | <u>Be late for the visit.</u> |
| 5. <u>Personalize the issue(s).</u>
Tell how the bill or action will affect you, your family, friends or neighbors. | <u>Be confrontational.</u>
(Don't ever threaten or berate the official.) |
| 6. <u>Provide reliable data/facts to support your position.</u> | <u>Try to discuss several different issues.</u> |
| | <u>Talk only in terms of numbers and statistics.</u> |
| | <u>Give incorrect information.</u> |

(over)

DO

DON'T

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| 7. <u>Provide the names of people who can be resources for the Member and give him/her additional information</u> - tell him/her you will get the answer. | <u>Try to answer questions that you don't know.</u> |
| 8. <u>Leave a written summary of your position.</u> | <u>Leave issue papers or other lobbying documents (e.g., Action Alerts).</u> |
| 9. <u>Have a picture taken with official (if possible).</u> | <u>Make a funny face or obscene gesture while your picture is being taken with your Member of Congress.</u> |
| 10. <u>Write a thank-you letter.</u>
-Thank the official for the visit
-Summarize the visit.
-Identify follow-up steps committed to by official and yourself.
-Ask for the official's commitment.
-Request a reply.
-Send photo print (if taken) identifying persons in photo and date. (Enlargements have a better chance of appearing on office wall/desk.) | <u>Forget to write a thank-you letter.</u> |
| 11. <u>Arrange for the official or staff person to meet people with mental retardation, cerebral palsy, and related disabilities of all ages who are receiving community-based supports and services in the state or district. Get to know the staff of the Member of Congress in their district office in your state.</u> | <u>Ignore the Member for the rest of the year.</u> |
| 12. <u>Have others write letters.</u>
-Write about one issue only.
-If writing about a bill refer to the title and number.
-Be brief. (One or two pages if possible.)
-Be specific. (Tell your position on the issue and why you hold that position.)
-Share personal experiences.
-Ask for the official's commitment.
-Request a reply. | |