

HOW TO MEET WITH YOUR LEGISLATOR

Utilize this resource to research your legislators (or any elected official), what power they hold, and (most importantly), what influences them. This worksheet's goal is to help you create a complete picture of your elected officials as you prepare to engage with them on civil liberties issues.

STEP 1: PREPARE FOR THE MEETING

Knowing a little bit about your legislator's political and personal history can go a long way to ensuring you can build rapport and have a successful meeting. Use our "How to Get to Know Your Legislator" worksheet to complete this critical step.

You don't have to be an expert, but make sure you've done some research on the specific issue and/or bill you want to talk to your legislator about. The more you know, the more your legislator can learn too! Visit our website throughout the legislative session as we identify the bills we are working on.

If possible, identify an issue for which the legislator could be thanked as well.

STEP 2: SET UP THE MEETING

It's helpful to be able to provide your legislator with details about who will be there (if it's a group meeting) and your preferred meeting format (in-person, virtual, phone) from the beginning to streamline the process and show you're prepared.

There are a couple different ways to do this:

- Reach out to your legislator directly using the contact information available on the Iowa Legislature website: legis.iowa.gov.
- From Monday-Thursday during the legislative session, you can request an in-person meeting with your legislator at the Capitol. The entrance to each chamber (House & Senate) has a bulletin board in front of it with instructions on how to do this. Staff are often present near these entrances and can help you with this process as well.

STEP 3: COORDINATE WITH YOUR GROUP (IF APPLICABLE)

Decide on when and how you will connect before the meeting. Designate a group leader who will ensure your agenda is followed and a person who can take notes during the meeting. Find out how much time you have for the meeting and allocate it among your group members. Make sure you are all on the same page with what you are asking the legislator to do.

Obtain the names and contact information of everyone who will be in the meeting to send to the legislator afterwards.

STEP 4: THE MEETING

When the legislator arrives (or calls in), introduce yourself and any other people in your group. Make sure the ask is repeated clearly several times. Facilitate flow of conversation among all group members. During the meeting, it is critical to keep to the agenda (see sample) by calling on members of the delegation to speak and prompt the legislator to ask questions.

Share a personal story about why this issue matters to you. You don't need to be an expert—your legislators work for you and care about your opinions. Telling your story is an important way to connect with the values and priorities your legislators care about, and it can help change their minds.

Ask follow-up questions to learn more about the members' position on the issue. Keep to the time your group decided on for your section of the meeting. It can help to have a watch or clock on hand to keep time.

STEP 5: AFTER THE MEETING

Follow up by email with the legislator within 3 days. Send them the contact information for everyone in your group and any 'leave behind' materials you have. The ACLU of Iowa would love to hear about your visit! Please let us know what you learn by emailing us at outreach@aclu-ia.org.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- Be persistent! Lawmakers are very busy during session and can't always respond right away. Follow up with a phone call if you sent an email. You can always go to the Capitol and ask to meet with them, too.
- Remember: Legislators work for YOU!
- Always be polite and respectful. This meeting is part of building a relationship.

SAMPLE GROUP AGENDA

1. Introduce yourselves, starting with the group leader.

Begin with a round of introductions and exchange contact information. Explain who you are and your relevant affiliations. Note-taker gives the legislator a list of your delegation members and their affiliations. Ask how much time the legislator has.

2. Say "thank you" (group leader).

Thank the legislator for a position they've taken which you support.

3. Introduce the reason for the meeting (group leader).

This should be the first (but not the last!) time you make your ask. Check out our "How to Make an Ask" resource to ensure your ask is as strong as possible.

4. Tell your stories.

Explain why you care about this issue and what it means to your community. End each story by repeating the ask.

5. Respond to follow up questions and listen.

Ask for and listen to the legislator's responses to your request.

- » Sample Question: Do you support the ask? What other information do you need?
- » Sample Question: What strategies do you support to address this issue?
- » Sample Question: Do you hear from constituents on this issue?

6. Make the ask (delegation member)

After your discussion, repeat the ask, give the office a "leave behind" with your asks, and assure follow up.

7. Thank the office for meeting with you (group leader)

8. Follow up

Email the legislator within three days of the visit with the names of attendees and any follow up information you discussed.

CONTACT US!

HAVE A QUESTION?

Email us at outreach@aclu-ia.org.

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