

# Day at the Capitol Things to Know

## Have fun and enjoy participating in the democratic process

What you are doing is very special. The right to petition your government goes all the way back to the beginning of our great country. Legislators welcome you and value hearing about your concerns.

## There is great value to what you are doing---greater value with follow up

Lending your voice to the efforts of others at the capitol will make a difference in promoting legislation that benefits your members and your organization's ability to serve them. There is no question about that. But you can add greater value to your efforts if you follow up your visit with a letter and continued contact with your legislators. **Your goal is for your legislator to remember who you are—to have a relationship with you.**

## Have a coordinator for each visit

You may be visiting a legislator on your own, but if you are visiting in a group be sure to have a coordinator that starts and ends the legislative visit. You should also go over with your coordinator your role and the role of others in the group during the visit.

## You do not have to be an expert

You are special and you are effective with your legislator because of what you know. Do not worry about things you do not know. Just be prepared to say “I do not know that but I will get that information to you.”

## Start and stop on time

Be sure to determine in advance how much time you have for the visit. Watch your time and when your time is up; say “I think that is all the time we have. We want to be respectful of your time and we thank you for your time.” Oftentimes, the legislator will say, “I have more time”.

## Anatomy of the visit

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- Everyone should introduce him or herself and state where he or she is from.
- Thank legislator for service to the state. Legislators do not make a lot of money and often times it is a difficult and thankless job.
- Tell why you are there. “We are here to ask you to support...”
- Tell at least one story that describes or illustrates the problem that needs legislation to remedy (or the problem that the legislation will cause.)
- Leave a handout with everyone’s name, email, address and phone # on it. Staple a business card you have one.
- Thank the legislator for his or her time.
- Take photo of group with legislator.
- Sign guest book when leaving if one is available.

### Be sure to follow up

1. Follow up with a letter to the legislator thanking her for her time and restate the bill # and, briefly, the reasons you need the legislation. Include a copy of the photo you took and ask the legislator to sign it and send it back. Copy the state office.
2. Send the photo to your local paper with a short letter about the visit and issue. If it is published, send a copy to the legislator. If you have a Facebook page, post the photo and an explanation.

Report what you learn; what you are asked. Information is powerful in any lobbying effort. Be sure to complete the report card you will be provided on each of your legislative visits and turn it in as instructed. This will be of great help in any follow up efforts by your state office

### Do’s and Don’ts during your visit

Watch jargon

Ask about opposition/concerns with your issue

Tell the truth-always

Keep promises-follow up on requests for additional information

### Good luck

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