

# A Guide for Meeting with your Legislator

## 1. Introduce yourself

Legislators will remember your story better if they can connect it to a person and a place, so say something about yourself and your hospital. **Know something about your legislator**, especially if this is the first time you are meeting them. Visit their legislative or campaign website for background information

## 2. Thank them for meeting with you (if you have a specific example of something they have worked on, use it!)

## 3. Review your agenda: be aware of the time you have

If you are meeting with your legislator in their office, you will have at most 15 minutes to discuss your priority issues. Begin by clearly summarizing your position on the issue(s) you want to discuss. If you are meeting with your legislator out of their office, confirm how much time you have.

## 4. Know your key messages: be direct, clear, and concise

Elected officials meet with many people every day. They may not be familiar with your issue(s). Be clear and direct about what you are explaining or asking. Use a lot of examples to illustrate your points. **Stay on topic about your hospital and issues**. Avoid jargon, acronyms, and too much detail.

## 5. Do not interrupt

While you may be anxious to make your point(s), be careful to give the legislator time to talk.

## 6. Admit you do not know the answer to a question

If the legislator asks a question you cannot answer, say you do not know the answer. Promise you will get back to the legislator and do not forget to follow up as soon as you can!

## 7. Ask for something

Always ask for something, even if it is simply having them keep an open mind. Do not threaten or grandstand, but do not expect the legislator to read your mind.

## 8. Ask how you can help them

There may be an issue the legislator wants your advice or support on, or perhaps he or she might like to meet with your staff. Ask if there is anything you can do to assist. If so, be sure to follow up as soon as you can!

## 9. Always keep the door open

Respect the legislator's views, even if you disagree. Be polite. **Avoid talking about controversial issues and presidential politics**. Make sure you will be welcomed back!

## 10. Say thank you and recognize the visit

Thank the legislator for their time and consideration; express your hope to meet again. If you are meeting in their office, invite them to your hospital. **Highlight the visit** – with permission, take photos of the visit and share the story in your hospital's communications (newsletter, social media). Consider sending a press release to local media.