



30 Tips for Good Advocacy

1. Know the name and gender of your elected officials
2. Go into the office even if the door is closed. Do not knock.
3. Ask if they have a toll free number.
4. Always put your address on emails so they know the office knows you are a constituent. Chairs and members of committees have a large constituency so contact them, too, if they deal with your issue.
5. If you know the bill number, use it. If you know the companion bill number, use that too. Staff are sometimes generalists and may not know the bill by its number.
6. Be polite. That staff member decides if your message goes to the legislator or to the waste bin. Plan for 20 minutes max with staff and the elected official.
7. Always agree to meet with staff. They really influence the outcome.
8. Giving them something in writing helps. Include contact information.
9. Get in the debate as early as possible. Getting people not to co-sponsor legislation can also help.
10. Talk to your legislators wherever you see them—church, the grocery store, local events. You can start by just chit-chatting to build the relationship.
11. Send thank-you notes or make thank-you calls. Remember, no gifts!
12. If your legislator has a newsletter, mailing list, or email distribution list, get on it.
13. Attend public hearings and listening sessions, even if just to say hello.
14. The more local contacts you have, the better.

15. Double the impact of every action you take by having a friend do the same.
16. Sign up for legislative notifications if you have issues or bills you are following.
17. Petitions help but individual letters are even better.
18. Name calling and anger are counter-productive. So is saying you will never vote for them again.
19. Be issue-specific and outcome-specific. Do not use general statements.
20. Say what you want them to do, e.g., vote a certain way, make an amendment, etc. In other words, make a specific “ask” and try to get an answer.
21. Remember, sometimes not making things worse is a victory!
22. Celebrate victories, even little ones.
23. If leaving a message on voicemail, slowly say your phone number and name **twice**. Remember to also state your city and address so they know you are a constituent.
24. Timeliness is important. Always be on time.
25. You can always submit written testimony.
26. Have fun! It is a joy to do good work for a good cause.
27. Be patient. Sometimes we need to educate people and it takes more than one legislative session to get a bill passed.
28. Don't assume that every person you talk to knows the issue, but don't talk down, either. Ask the other person what they know.
29. Use a separate handout for each issue or bill. They go into separate bill files.
30. This is about relationship building. The better they know you, the more likely they are to listen.