

## **Ways Nonprofits Can Engage With U.S. Congressional Delegation**

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### **In Written Correspondence**

1. Address your elected officials as “The Honorable” before the first and last name in written communications. When referring to them in greeting or salutation, you want to use their title (“Senator” or “Representative”) before their last name.
2. The golden rule for any communication: be brief. Focus on one particular issue (or piece of legislation). Explain what action you want your legislator to take (i.e. support, oppose, introduce, etc.).
3. If you’re talking about a bill that has been introduced, include its bill number (H### or S###, depending on whether it’s a House or Senate bill), its short title, and its principal sponsor(s).
4. Make it personal. How does this issue or legislation impact you, your family, and your community?
5. Follow-up, especially after a vote has occurred. You can share your appreciation for their action, or let them know if you are disappointed. Again, it’s up to the people to hold elected officials accountable for representing your values.

### **In-Person Meetings**

1. Prepare, prepare, prepare. Make notes about the issue or problem that concerns you, the bill number and title that deals with it (if there is one), and what you want done. Know the name and district of the legislator you’re visiting, who s/he represents (counties, cities), where they live and what they do for a living, and the committees they’re on that have any connection to your issue. Know whether this legislator represents you, and if not, what your connection is with him/her.
2. Schedule an appointment. Make sure you arrive on time.
3. Be friendly and professional. Legislators are people too. Introduce yourself and explain your connection to this elected official (i.e. “you’re my representative” or “you co-sponsored this bill”).
4. Briefly explain what you’re there to discuss, limit it to one issue. Mention why you personally are interested in this issue. Ask directly for what you want – support or opposition for a bill, a funding item, an amendment, or whatever. (It’s great to also provide a short written summary of your issue including access to more information – i.e. websites, resources, etc.)
5. Sit back and listen. Take notes. Try to answer any questions, if you can. If you don’t know the answer, don’t make one up. Simply respond: “I don’t know the answer, but I will find out and follow-up with you.”
6. Follow up. Send a thank you note/email for the meeting. Be sure to get back to them with any promised information (or if you couldn’t find the answer they were looking for, share how you tried to obtain the answer).