

# WORKING WITH LEGISLATORS

## BEST PRACTICES

**Overview:** One of the keys to passing legislation is building and maintaining good relationships with legislators. Below is a guide to best practices for working with legislators. power mapping information to complete the following charts to help you ensure that you have the votes to win.

1. Be prepared. You should always know your top talking points and 'asks' for the legislators.
2. Don't be intimidated. Legislators work for you and have just as much to be nervous about as you.
3. Make it personal. Legislators and staffers hear about bills all day. Personal stories are influential and make your advocacy more memorable.
4. Use data and statistics from your legislator's district. If an issue doesn't matter to that district's delegate, then they are not likely to support the initiative.
5. Be brief. During Session most interactions with legislators will be short and limited to 10 to 15 minutes.
6. Never underestimate the power of staff. If you are meeting with a staff member, do not be disappointed. Staffers are the ones who track and determine what legislation the legislator will be supporting. If you are rude to a staffer or dismissive, you can expect to have difficulty engaging that legislator to support your cause.
7. Focus your lobbying efforts on legislators who are members of the subcommittees and committees where your bill is assigned. The majority of bills die before they reach a full chamber vote.
8. Close strong. Most people will share their lobbying talking points and forget to ask directly if the legislator will be supporting their particular issue. Make sure you don't forget your ask.
9. Follow up. It sometimes can take years to pass legislation. After your meetings, you should always follow up with a thank you and send reminders. If you are expecting a response from the legislator or their staff, don't be afraid to keep following up. Staff and legislators have a million things to do, so sometimes things get dropped.

