

TEN TIPS ON HOW TO VISIT WITH YOUR LEGISLATOR

1. Get to know him or her beforehand.

Do a little research either at the library or on the Legislative website – www.mlis.state.md.us. Learn about their family, schooling, career, etc. Find out what committees they serve on, and those on which they have previously served. Research what other political offices they have held, as well as the civic organizations in which they have been involved.

2. Make an appointment.

During the legislative session (2nd Wednesday in January through the second Monday in April) they are in their Annapolis offices. The rest of the year they need to be contacted through their interim office. In some cases that is back in the District, in others it is their Annapolis Office. **The Student Day on the Hill is coordinated through APTA of Maryland who will make the appointments for you based on the district you live in.**

3. Present your issue(s) briefly and persuasively.

If you are talking about a specific legislative proposal that has been introduced, have the bill or at least the bill number with you. State your position on the issue clearly and support your position with facts. If possible, have some background material to leave with the legislator. **APTA of Maryland will have talking points for you to use regarding specific legislation.**

4. Be polite.

Be calm, reasonable and respectful. Be politely firm. Threats or open antagonism are never helpful and are often counterproductive.

5. Be accurate.

If you are asked a question and you don't know the answer, DON'T GUESS. Tell the legislator you'll provide the information later ... and make sure that you do. Giving a legislator misinformation will only erode your credibility.

6. Use personal examples.

If the issue is one that personally affects you, your practice, or your patients, and you have first hand experience, make sure you tell the legislator your story.

7. Try to secure a specific response.

If they have not already offered it, politely ask for your legislator's position on the issue in question. Also, seek their support in urging other legislators, and especially leadership, to support your position. Encourage them to feel free to contact the MDA's lobbyist with questions, informational requests etc. Also, offer them access to you also.

8. *Don't ignore the legislator's staff, but recognize that usually the only meaningful contact is direct contact.*

Full-time legislative aides are employed by a limited number of legislators, but those full-time aides can have a great deal of influence. Also, access to the legislator is facilitated when you have established a friendly rapport with his or her secretary. Get to know their staff, and communicate with them regularly.

9. *Follow-up.*

Always send a letter of thanks following a personal meeting. Thank them for any commitments made, and press again for a commitment as yet "unmade". Restate your position on the issue. Send any materials promised.

10. *Meet again! And again!*

Your initial meeting should only be the beginning of a long-term working relationship. Continue to meet with him or her on the issue until it is concluded. Get on their mailing lists and keep up-to-date on his or her actions. Attend their fundraisers. Visit with them during the interim back in the district.

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