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## **Do's and Don'ts: Tips for Meeting Your Representatives**

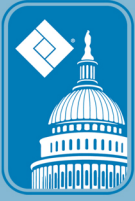
Meeting with your elected officials is often the most effective way of educating them on a public policy issue. A face-to-face meeting provides an excellent opportunity to convey and receive information and to develop relationships that will benefit your cause. You can simplify the process by following the tips and guidelines outlined below.

### **Before the meeting**

- Request the meeting in writing and follow up by phone to confirm the date and time and who will be attending the meeting.
- If other people will be accompanying you to the meeting, decide in advance each person's role. Designate one person as the facilitator. Find out in advance how many people can attend the meeting.
- Ask how long you will have to present your issues.
- Be clear about the purpose of the meeting and what you want to accomplish.
- Do your homework ahead of time; research the legislator's voting record and know whether he/she sits on any key committees that affect your issue. You should visit the member's website and search online for useful background information.
- Prepare materials to bring to the meeting both as "props" during your presentation and as a leave-behind for the legislator.

### **During the meeting**

- Be sure to arrive on time and dress appropriately (business attire).
- All participants should introduce themselves and indicate their position with their institution, and be sure to specify that you are a constituent.
- Start the meeting by thanking the legislator for meeting with you and, when appropriate, for being supportive of your position on an issue.
- Present your issue in a clear and concise manner
- Try to incorporate a personal reference or anecdote to make the issue more real to the legislator.
- Request specific action from your legislator (e.g., support for, or opposition to, a specific bill; floor remarks; talking to leadership).
- Do not argue.
- Do not lecture.
- After presenting your position, listen to the Legislator or Legislative Aide.
- If you do not know the answer to a question, do not be afraid to say you do not know and that you will follow up after the meeting.



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- Thank the legislator or aide for his/her time.
- Give the legislator the leave-behind packet you prepared.

### **After the meeting**

- Write a thank you letter to the legislator that summarizes your conversation and any commitments that were made.
- Follow-up and provide any additional information that was requested or offered.
- Please notify the WOCN Society's Executive Director about the substance of your meeting if relevant to the WOCN Society's membership at large.