

Tips for Successful Meetings With Your Legislators

Face-to-face meetings with your elected officials and their staff make a difference! It's the most powerful way to educate them about the issues and bring them to our side. Here are a few tips for having an effective meeting with your legislators

BEFORE THE MEETING – PREPARE



1. **Schedule ahead.** Call the legislator's office to schedule a meeting. Be willing to be flexible, and to meet with staff instead of the legislator – the staff have a lot of impact on the legislation! Then let us know that you've set up a meeting by emailing Judith@FarmAndRanchFreedom.org.
2. **Plan who will go to the meeting.** It's fine to go alone. Having others with you can help demonstrate that other constituents are concerned about this issue as well, but no more than 4 people should attend.
3. **Organize your thoughts.** Often, you'll only have 10 minutes to state your case, so it's very important for you to be well prepared, and to be able to express your views concisely and clearly.
 - Make notes for yourself; list the key points you want to make. **Be brief!** Include the following:
 - ✓ Personalize the issue; explain how it affects you, your family, and others in the community.
 - ✓ Avoid excessive background – get to the point quickly.
 - ✓ Ask for action: explain what you want them to do and how your proposal will improve things.
 - Familiarize yourself with various sides of the issue. Be aware of who might oppose your proposal and why, and be prepared to explain why your side is right.
 - If possible, rehearse ahead of time with others who are familiar with the issue. You don't have to memorize a speech; you want to sound genuine and natural and feel confident explaining your case.

DURING THE MEETING



1. **Arrive early.** If you know you're going to be late, call ahead and let them know when you expect to arrive. Also be prepared to be flexible; even though you have an appointment, you may be kept waiting or your meeting may be interrupted.
2. **Introduce yourself,** remind the legislator or staffer that you are constituents, and mention that you are members of the Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance.
3. **Be concise and clear about the issue.** Asking the person “Are you familiar with (___ issue)?” is a wonderful way to open the conversation. Have your prepared comments ready, but let the conversation evolve – make it a dialogue rather than a lecture. Focus on the aspects you are most comfortable with.
4. **Be prepared to educate him or her about the issue.** We can provide you with materials to help explain complex issues. But don't be afraid to say “I don't know” and offer to follow up with more information after the meeting.
5. **Be clear that this meeting is the beginning of an ongoing dialogue.** If you're meeting with staff rather than the legislator, ask them to call you once they've had a chance to talk with the legislator, so that you can find out where they stand on the issue. Get a business card from them, for follow-up.

AFTER THE MEETING



1. **Write a thank you note** to your legislator and/or staffer. Email or fax is fine.
2. **Send us your impressions of the meeting,** so that we know where your legislators stand and so we can follow-up.

The follow-up, both by you and FARFA, is very important. The more you build a relationship with your legislators and staffers, the more of an impact you can have when there are specific bills or votes.