

COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR LEGISLATOR

(Personal Visits with Legislators)

There is no more effective way to communicate with your legislator than by a face-to-face personal visit. Such visits are somewhat difficult to arrange with U.S. Representatives and Senators, but state legislators are very accessible to their constituents. Here are some tips concerning personal visits with your legislators.

Before the Meeting:

1. Read the bill. Many people overlook this very basic step. The text and summary of bills can be found at the Missouri [Senate](#) and [House](#) websites.
2. Check to see if the Missouri Catholic Conference has a position on the bill. Visit our [website](#) and click "Bill Tracker." Sometimes there is a small delay before we post a bill. If you don't see the bill you are concerned about, give us a call at (573) 635-7239.
3. Get the facts and know the issues surrounding the proposed legislation. With Internet search engines, it is now easy to obtain information very quickly. One suggestion: check your sources; make sure they are reliable.
4. Invite a friend to go with you. The Lord sent the disciples out in pairs. You may feel more comfortable if you take a friend with you.
5. Consider scheduling your visit. The state capitol is not like Washington. It is more informal and far easier to get into an office for a visit. But it still may help, especially with state senators, to schedule your visit in advance.

During the Meeting:

1. Approach the visit as a friendly conversation not a debate. Your goal is not to score debating points but to provide accurate information to the legislator and seek his vote on the bill in question.
2. After a few friendly preliminaries, let the legislator know about the bill you wish to discuss.

3. Don't assume the legislator knows all about the bill. Legislators have to deal with hundreds of bills. Tactfully inform him about the provisions of the bill and your position on it.
4. If you don't know the answer to a question posed by your legislator, just say so. Tell the legislator you will try to get some answers and report back.
5. Listen to what your legislator says. The meeting should not be one-sided. It should be a genuine exchange of ideas. It is only in listening that you can determine the legislator's position and why he/she holds that position.
6. Use repeatable tactics. Don't do anything to close the door to future communication. You may not agree with your legislator on this issue, but there will be other issues in the future.
7. If your legislator cannot make a definite commitment on the bill, indicate you will check back very soon to see if he/she has had time to consider the matter. You have a right to expect clear answers from your legislator on his position. You are his/her constituent.
8. Be respectful of your legislator's time. Legislators have many committee meetings and other commitments. A lot can be said in 10 or 15 minutes. Few legislators will have time for an hour long discussion.
9. Lastly, don't forget to say thanks. This visit can pave the way to more visits. You are building a relationship so you can discuss on-going concerns with the legislator.

To find your legislators click [here](#).

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