



Advocacy Education Series: Attending a Town Hall Meeting

Hearing from concerned constituents is a huge part of a legislator's job, and by hosting meetings throughout a legislative district, elected officials can gauge how voters feel about issues, legislation, and policy, and hear about issues that may be flying under the radar.

- **Be Prepared.** By preparing yourself with a thoughtful and cohesive argument, you will be memorable and your message will come through to your legislator clearly.
- **Tell A Personal Story.** Town hall meetings are where legislators can get first-hand accounts of how certain legislation and policies are impacting their voter base, be it individuals, groups, businesses, non-profit organizations, etc. A good personal story will evoke a strong emotional response and will stick with those who hear it longer than a database or pie chart will.
- **Be Respectful.** Whether or not your legislator agrees with you, they *want* to hear your opinion. You don't need to be rude or yell at them to get their attention.
- **Strength in Numbers.** Having colleagues, friends, family, etc. attend the meeting with you is an effective way of getting your message through to your elected official. Have each person tell a personal story and remind the legislator how many other people are represented by your attendance. You can also coordinate a larger effort so that there are people prepared to speak on your issue at each one of the legislator's town halls meetings.
- **Interact with Staff.** Introduce yourself, tell them your story, ask for their card, and do any kind of follow-up they suggest.
- **Bring a Leave-Behind.** Any time you interact with an elected official you should have a one-page document with you that summarizes why you are there, what your personal story is, why the legislator should care, and what you want them to do. Leave your sheet with the staff person or directly with the legislator if the opportunity presents itself. If possible, ask who in the legislator's office deals with the issues you are interested in. Once you know the person, you can contact them directly and build rapport.
- **Follow up.** Doing so will demonstrate that you are serious about your issue and committed to making a difference.

For additional guidance or questions, please contact Monica L. Reid, Senior Director of Advocacy, at mreid@nacdl.org.