Meeting with Your Senators and Representatives

How to Plan, Schedule and Conduct Meetings with your State Legislators

Based on the time of the year, legislators will be located in either their home/district office or their Tallahassee office (during the legislative session and committee weeks). During even numbered years, the legislative session occurs between January and March. In the odd numbered years, it occurs between March and May If you call during these months, expect legislators to be in their State Capitol office at 400 S. Monroe St in Tallahassee. The first step is to determine whether you’re setting a meeting in the district where you live or traveling to Tallahassee for a legislative advocacy visit with your associates.

Next, you must identify legislators who represent your District. Visit the links below to search.

<http://www.flsenate.gov/Senators/Find>

<http://www.flhouse.gov/Sections/Representatives/myrepresentative.aspx>

When the page opens you will be prompted to enter your home address.

Click on you STATE Senator and STATE Representative and you’ll be directed to the official homepage each legislator.

When the legislator’s homepage opens, distinguish between the district and Tallahassee contact information and identify the appropriate phone number based on your desired meeting location.

What to expect when you call:

When you call, be prepared to offer the days and times you are available to meet with your legislator. Your call will be answered by a legislative aide; ask this person to transfer you to the best contact to speak with about setting a meeting. It is common for the legislative aide to ask that you send an email request for the meeting instead of scheduling it over the phone, so please be ready to follow up immediately via email.

Script for your call:

|  |
| --- |
| Hello my name is (However you introduce yourself), and I am a constituent of (Senator or Representative: Legislator’s Name), and a member of the Florida Association of School Administrators (FASA). Depending on where you plan to meet the legislator, choose #1 or #2 below:1. In your area: “Do you know when (Legislator’s Name) is scheduled to be back in the District office?

(If the response is, “In 3 months,” you might be asked to call back when the legislative session is coming to an end so that the staffer has a better idea of the legislator’s post-session schedule)(2) In Tallahassee: “I plan to visit the Capitol and…(continue with verbiage below)I would like to meet with her/him just to introduce myself as a constituent and talk generally about instructional materials funding and policy.” Great, I’m available anytime between \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ am and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ pm on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Thank you. (Time) (Time) (Date) |

Successful Meetings Take Planning

Okay, now you have an appointment scheduled. What next? *Arrive ON TIME.*  A staffer will escort you.

(1) Introduce yourself to your legislator, “Hi my name is \_\_\_\_\_\_, I’m a constituent and I live in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and work in \_\_\_\_\_\_. (FYI: Constituent means you’re a voting member of the legislator’s community)

(2) Learn about the legislator (I wanted to visit and meet with you to learn a little more about your background and your vision for the district). LET THEM ANSWER; and then ask, “Are you involved with any community organizations or local charities?” LET THEM ANSWER. Take notes to recall these answers later.

(3) Discuss your work (“I’m sorry that I didn’t have time to learn more about you while you were campaigning, but I work as an (fill-in/replace with your title and work). I graduated from (Alma Mater), a college in (city/town), and I’ve been working in our community for (number) of years. I brought some background information for your staff to review that provides insight regarding the Florida Association of School Administrators platform.”

(4) Finish your visit by stating, “It was nice to meet you. Thank you for your time. Your staff has my contact info, please call on me discuss any questions you might have about FASA’s platform or any other K-12 education issues “

(5) On the way out, make sure the staff has your contact info (Business Card), and tell them that you are available to volunteer for special events in support of (Legislator’s Name).

Each meeting will probably last only 10-15 minutes, but you will be instantly become recognizable to legislator as an ambassador for FASA and a local resource for information.

Tips:

Repeat these steps and you will have success in meeting with each of your State Legislators. Make notes to remind yourself of helpful details about your visit. Be certain to promptly follow-up on any questions or requests for additional information. Send a thank you card to the legislator and personalize it with something notable that you learned or gained from your meeting.

How to follow-up on your meeting: yes, there is more.

Please write and send a short thank-you note to each legislator with whom you meet. This letter must be sent 1-3 days following your meeting encounter. The full effect of sending a thank-you note loses value when it is not sent in a “timely” manner and when it lacks specificity for which “thanks” is being offered.

See Below: The following note is designed for full-effect. Please use over and over again.

|  |
| --- |
| On Business Letterhead, if available (no address required with signature) otherwise Plain White Paper is fine (use address as seen below with salutation) (Date) “Dear Senator or Representative (Legislator’s Name), Thank you for meeting with me at your office two days ago, on (date). I appreciated the opportunity to learn more about your vision for the District. It sounds like your plans (insert district vision example here) to increase the number of available parking spaces downtown will be convenient for shoppers and provide a boost to businesses in that area. I also want to commend you are supporting (insert volunteer example here) the food pantry and shelter at the First Unitarian Church on Main Street. Many of our neighbors really rely on that support. Please let your staff know that I am available to volunteer for special projects, fundraising efforts and your next election campaign. Thank you for serving our community. Sincerely, (Hand written signature)\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(Type your name, with credentials)(Name of your district) (District Address) (Business Telephone) (Business Email)  |