

# *General communication tips*

In all forms of communication with your legislator, keep the following points in mind:

1. **Always make it very clear that you are a constituent.**

2. **Always introduce yourself.**

Even at a second or third meeting, give your name so your legislator won't be in the awkward position of trying to remember your name.

3. **Be sure that you have factual information, and that you are a credible source.**

4. **Thank the legislator for some good work he/she has done.**

Try to identify something worthwhile in the voting record, authorship of a piece of legislation or championship of a cause. Legislators like to know that you know the record. If nothing else, thank him/her for meeting with you.

5. **Know the budget status ahead of time**

The budget will dictate what is possible.

6. **Educate them on the issue.**

This is where you tell what is right, what is wrong, and what needs to be done. Talk about how people (constituents) will be affected. Use any data and statistics you have, but don't overwhelm them!

7. **Use personal stories.**

A personal story will leave an image that will be remembered long after the data and statistics fade.

**8. Listen to the legislator's arguments**

This will help you craft an effective response to the visit. Whether the legislator agrees or disagrees, be courteous.

**9. Ask what you can do.**

Ask if you can provide further information, set up a meeting with folks in the district, arrange a tour of a program. Try to become a "reliable resource."

**10. Ask for his/her commitment .**

Ask for what you want. Get them to say yes or no.

**11. Thank him/her again.**

Legislators are very busy and taking even ten or fifteen minutes out of a day to meet with voters is time away from something else.

**12. Don't just go to them when you need something.**

Help them out by working on campaigns or mentioning their good deeds in the paper.

**13. Get to know the staff.**

They can be very influential.

**14. Keep your legislator up to date on your concerns.**

If legislation has changed, or your legislator has changed his or her position, they will be unhappy with you if you are talking about something that is no longer an issue or the current situation.

**15. Understand the legislative process and monitor your issue.**

Many issues are decided in committee, where most of the work is done by a group of members who specialize in a given area. Attend a committee hearing in Madison on your issue if you can. Let your legislator know you are attending the committee meeting. Always sign

in on the registration sheet so that legislators know who was attending a given hearing.

**16. Enlist others to promote the cause.**

Encourage friends in your church, civic group, association, or neighborhood that share your view to write, call, and contact the representative and senator from your district.

**17. Timing is important.**

Get involved early with an issue, so that you are not in a position of being "reactive" but "proactive."

*These tips are courtesy of the Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters*