



Advocacy At Home

Meeting with elected officials back home in the district is a great way to connect and advocate for a cause that is important to you. Before requesting a meeting or attending the already scheduled event, consider your goal or request.

You might be asking them to take a position on an issue or a bill. You might be sharing information you find important to the district. Know your elected official: do research ahead of time. Knowing if they already support or oppose an issue you wish to meet with them about will help you better prepare your case.

In short, to effectively connect with North Carolina lawmakers, **identify your specific state representative and senator, craft a concise and personalized message with a clear ask, and build ongoing professional relationships with both the legislators and their staff.**

General communication- Whether you are scheduling an in-person meeting back in the district, attending an event hoping to talk to an elected official, or communicating with your legislator, here is a quick guide to help you prepare.

Find your lawmakers

Use official tools: Visit the North Carolina General Assembly (NCGA) website and use the "**Find Your Legislators**" feature under the District Representation tab to look up your specific NC House and Senate members by your home address or business address. You can also identify your Congressional members.



NCGA Website: www.ncleg.gov.

Choose your communication channel

- **Emails and letters:** Keep written messages under 300 words, use a clear subject line, and request a reply regarding their position on the issue.
- **Phone calls:** Call the legislative office, ask to speak with the specific legislative assistant, state your concise message, and follow up with an email.

- **In-person meetings:** Schedule visits ahead of time, arrive on time, stay focused on one or two main points, and bring a clean one-page fact sheet to leave behind.
- **Community events:** Join a lawmaker at one of their community events. Stay in touch with lawmakers by joining their distribution list to get their newsletter.

Prepare your message ahead of time

- **State who you are:** Always introduce yourself immediately as a voter living in their specific district.
- **Include bill details:** If you are contacting your legislators about a bill, clearly reference specific bill numbers (e.g., HB or SB) or budget items right at the beginning of your communication.
- **Make a direct ask:** Tell the lawmaker precisely what action you want them to take, such as voting yes or no, funding a program, or amending text.
- **Share local impact:** Explain briefly how the issue directly affects you, your family, or their local community with real-world facts or short stories.

Types of activities

When legislators feel connected to your issues, they will be more likely to offer their support. Legislators appreciate opportunities to interact with their constituents. Let them know when local press might cover the event.

- **Schedule a one-on-one meeting.**
- **Invite your legislator to visit your organization:** Invite your legislators and their staff when you are holding an event, program, or celebration of any kind.

Find events already happening

- Get on mailing lists for your elected officials to see when Town Halls are scheduled or if they have any public appearances coming up at festivals or local events.
- Follow them on social media as they may post information about upcoming events.
- Check their websites for a list of events.

If you are unable to attend an event or you are not finding information about any upcoming events, reach out to their office and request to meet with them.

Prepare for the meeting

If you are setting up a one-on-one meeting, ask their staff member how much time you'll have for your meeting. If you plan to have someone attend with you, let the staff member know who else will be in attendance. Let the staff member know if you want to meet to talk

about a specific bill or issue or to share information about an important topic. If you are attending a Town Hall event, know your time will be limited to a few minutes.

Best practices

- Be concise: stick to one topic.
- Be prepared with a few talking points.
- Allow time for the elected official to speak and ask questions.
- Put a face to the issue. Data is important but so is storytelling.
- Be polite, respectful, and non-partisan.
- Leave information behind like a one pager or issue brief.
- Work with the elected official's staff- they are your ticket in!
- Know both sides of the issue whether you're for or against the issue.
- Focus on local impact.
- Don't Lie: If you don't know the answer to a question they ask, don't panic. Write it down and let them know you will follow up. *Don't forget to follow up!*
- Don't use acronyms- spell everything out.
- Don't be intimidated.
- Don't threaten or become defensive. Stay calm.
- Build relationships year-round- not just when they're in session.
- Always say thank you.

Maintain the relationship

After your meeting with the elected official, follow up with a thank you note, phone call, or email in a timely manner. This will allow you to confirm your point one more time and follow up on any additional information you promised in your meeting.

- **On-going connections with lawmakers:** It is always best to connect with lawmakers when you are not asking for something.
- **Become a resource:** Often lawmakers make decisions on topics they know little about. This is your opportunity to become a resource. If they know and trust you, when an issue arises, they are more likely to come to you for information.
- **Value legislative staff:** Build a respectful rapport with aides and assistants, as they manage schedules and heavily influence policy research.
- **Say thank you:** Send a short note of appreciation after a meeting or thank them publicly when they take action that helps your community.

Note: This resource was adapted from our work with various nonprofit organizations over the years including AARP NC, Hearts for Home Care, and more.