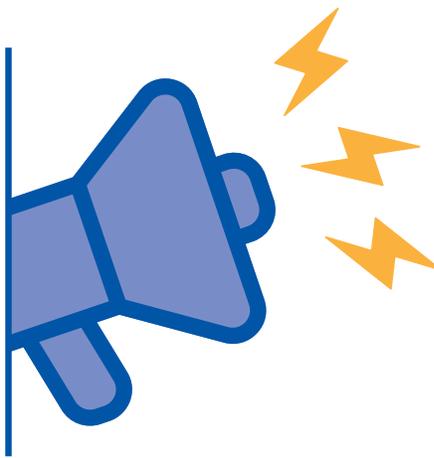


PUBLIC ADVOCACY TOOLKIT



Greater Milwaukee
& Waukesha County



TIPS ON HOW TO TALK WITH LEGISLATORS



- 1 Know how to reach them.** Be sure to get your legislators' telephone, address, and e-mail. Even if you have this information, it will not hurt to double-check in early January since legislators are sometimes assigned new offices after each election.
- 2 Find out the best time to reach them.** Ask them when they are most likely to be in their office. It will, of course, depend on their committee assignments. As a general rule, early morning and late afternoons are the best times to catch a legislator in their office.
- 3 Calls or emails are better than letters.** The legislative process is very fast paced. Legislation can be introduced and voted on in committee within 24 hours. If you want your legislators to know how you feel about a bill, do not assume you have time to write a letter. Call or email their office immediately.
- 4 Remember, policymakers and their staff are humans.** You may not agree with the political positions of your representatives or their staff, but it is counterproductive to use inflammatory language or to vilify them. Your arguments will be more effective if you can deliver your message using respectful language.
- 5 Staff members are important.** Don't be disappointed if you meet with a staff member instead of the policymaker. Staff members work closely with the representative and elevate important issues to their attention, and often bring content-area expertise to the meeting.
- 6 Be specific.** Always provide the bill number, author of the bill, and a summary of what the bill is about when you contact them. In addition, to the extent possible, let them know how the legislation will impact you, your family, and your community.
- 7 Be concise.** Legislators are inundated with letters and phone calls from lobbyists and constituents. Your message, whether it is communicated orally or in writing, should be brief and to the point. Try to keep anything you write to one page or less.
- 8 Stay in touch over the weekend and attend in-district events.** While away from the hustle and bustle of D.C. or Madison, they will not be as pressed for time and will be able to listen more attentively.
- 9 Do not expect them to be an expert on every bill.** It is impossible. Each session, thousands of bills and resolutions are introduced. If your legislator is not familiar with the bill you are talking about, do not be surprised or offended. It may be the first time they have heard about it. YOU can be the expert on your issues.
- 10 Do not forget to say, "thank you!"** Legislators, like mayors and council members, appreciate positive feedback, so look for opportunities to give them a pat on the back, especially publicly.
- 11 Remember: YOU ARE THE CONSTITUENT!**
- 12 Follow up.** Always send an email thanking your representative for taking the time to meet.

SAMPLE PHONE CALL TO LEGISLATORS



"Hi, this is [insert name] and I live in [city]. I'd like to speak to the staffer who works on candy funding."

"Hold on please while I check if that person is available. (pause) I'm sorry, our candy person isn't available right now. Can I take a message?"

"Yes, I'm calling about the FY21 Trick-or-Treat appropriations bill. I know Senator Snickers is on that committee and as a Skittles specialist I want to make sure fruit flavored candy is given at least \$3 million for FY21. This will provide predictable, sustained funding for the candy and the researchers who receive Trick-or-Treat grants. My colleagues and I are doing research on how fruit flavored candy could affect the happiness of children and it is vital that our work continues."

"Thanks for your message. Can I get your full name, address, and telephone number?"

"[Full name], 1234 First Street,
Milwaukee, WI, 12345.
(555) 555-5555."

"Thank you. I will pass along
your message to the senator."

"Thank you."



SAMPLE VOICEMAIL TO LEGISLATORS



“Hi, my name is [name] and I’m a constituent of [city/town or residence]. I’m calling to express my outrage that our state has chosen to not reform our expungement system for criminal records, making it harder for individuals with non-violent criminal backgrounds to secure family-sustaining work. Without a fair system of expungement, every criminal sentence can become a life sentence if we don’t allow people the chance to have a fresh start.

Thank you for your time and attention.

[Full name], 1234 First Street, Milwaukee, WI, 12345. (555) 555-5555.”

SAMPLE FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS WITH LEGISLATORS



Things to have with you:

- Materials to hand out with information of the topic you are discussing. If possible, send your materials a couple of days in advance. Your meeting will be more productive if the representative or staffer has the chance to research your issue beforehand.
- Smartphone/camera – take a photo and post to social media. Tag the representative!
- A handout with your main points to give to the representative or their staffer.

Remember that your representative is there to work for you.

Example of What to Say:

“Hi Representative [last name], I’m here to discuss expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit, often called the EITC. The EITC is a huge boost to the working poor, who often rely on their EITC to bring them above the poverty line. In addition to being a financial boost for working people, the EITC boosts the local economy. Research has shown that the EITC encourages work, reduces poverty, and leads to long-term gains in child health and academic success. We need to look at ways to grow EITC funding and access so more families can continue to grow financially.”

SOCIAL MEDIA ADVOCACY



Tweeting at your representative is often the most effective way to get a point across directly. Tweets with images or videos are more likely to be shared and provide additional information.



The Honorable [full name]
United State Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator [last name]:

The legislation addressing [describe issue concisely, or use exact name of bill before legislature] is of paramount interest to me because I am a [Certified Academic Language Therapist, parent, teacher, etc.] This issue directly impacts [my students, my profession, the way we as professionals will be able to function effectively, my child, etc.]

I am primarily concerned about [describe major specific concern within the larger issue] because (state reasons or examples briefly, with only as many relevant details as necessary to make your point clearly.) Other aspects of this same issue that affects [my student, profession, child] are [describe briefly and secondary concerns and supporting situations, reasons, examples, etc.]

Although I have read reports of your position in the newspapers, I realize this. may not fully represent your viewpoint. Therefore, I will look forward to your reply expressing your opinions, and your current stance on the issue. Thank you for your consideration of my viewpoint on this matter. I believe it is an important issue, and would like to see the legislation [pass, fail, or be amended] to ensure effective educational services for the students involved.

Sincerely,

[Your name],
[Address]
[Phone number]
[E-mail address]