

Effective Methods for Communicating with Policymakers

The goals of communicating with policymakers are to present the best arguments in favor of your position, and ask for their consideration in a respectful and deliberate manner.

To effectively communicate with lawmakers we recommend the following:



UNDERSTAND THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS.

Legislators have much more influence over legislation within their committees of jurisdiction because it's these subgroups that often lead the process for drafting and vetting large pieces of legislation. Your medical society staff can guide you on which committees are most important on any given issue.



IDENTIFY ONE OR TWO TOPICS OF INTEREST.

If you want to discuss your ideas about expanding access to health care, don't get side tracked with a conversation about taxes or other unrelated issues. Sticking to the point will keep the conversation focused and productive.



USE YOUR PERSONAL STORIES.

As a leader in the medical community, your experience provides excellent, humanizing evidence to support the basis of your arguments and sharing these perspectives will help build trust.



CONNECT POTENTIAL IMPACTS TO PEOPLE.

Lawmakers are frequently up for election, meaning they depend on the support of their constituents and care deeply about how a law will impact communities they represent, so help them connect the dots.

The sooner you're able to start a dialogue, the more valuable your input will be.



BE RESPECTFUL, POLITE, AND HONEST.

Put yourself in the shoes of your representative, how do you prefer to interact with people who want to convince you to see things from their perspective?



FOCUS ON THE SPECIFIC LEGISLATIVE ISSUES.

Keep financial or political support out of the conversation. Threats of retaliation or *quid pro quos* are counterproductive to the goals of communicating with Congress, not to mention illegal, and will make building a relationship an uphill battle, if not impossible.



OFFER YOUR EXPERTISE.

Introduce yourself to the lawmaker and their staff. Offer yourself as a resource to provide perspective on health care ideas and issues that matter to your member. Rather than always asking something from your legislator, building a two-way relationship can have a meaningful and lasting impact.

It may take time and patience to achieve meaningful results from your interactions with policymakers so it's a good idea to connect with your representatives and establish a rapport with them and their staff. The sooner you're able to start a dialogue, the more valuable your input will be as they navigate turning ideas into laws.