"Dom’s* Top 20 List"
A Compilation of Tips for Effective Policy Advocacy
March 23, 2015

Before a Call or Meeting with a Lawmaker or Their Staff, Prepare…

1. Consider googling the lawmaker’s votes or past comments on matters related to your issue.
2. Sketch out a personal outline to use during your meeting or call, and practice your delivery.
3. Keep your call or meeting brief. A call can be a few minutes and a meeting roughly 15 minutes.
4. Include who you are, your connection to the community, if you are a constituent (where you live if you are a constituent), why you are visiting or calling (the primary ask in 1 or 2 sentences), personalize it (see next point), and include supportive information from personalized talking points.
5. At the beginning of any meeting, letter, call, or email to your lawmaker, before personalizing talking points an organization provides you, briefly share relevant personal experiences (your story, your personal insights, the story of someone else who has given you permission to share, etc.). Lawmakers often want and need real life examples and stories to inform their work.
6. Try to leave behind something in writing (fact sheets, newspaper clippings, brochures, etc.).
7. Focus on one direct request (“please vote for/against Assembly Bill X / Senate Bill Y, please ask your colleagues on the Joint Finance Committee to increase funding for…,” etc.).
8. If you do not speak with your lawmaker, ask that the lawmaker send you a written response.
9. Ask if there is any other information or answers they would like from you.
10. Ask them how else they might help you. There may be a way that you did not consider.
11. At the end, verbally review what you agreed to do for them and what they agreed to do for you.

During the Call or Meeting, Maintain Your Poise…

12. Be courteous, confident, positive, and honest. If you do not know the answer to a question, say so, and say that you will look into it and get back to them. Then, do so or ask us to do so.
13. Do not yell, rant, make personal attacks, or exaggerate. The lawmaker or staffer may be helpful on a different issue in the future.
14. If your lawmaker opposes your issue, courteously ask them their reasons for opposition, give the facts you have prepared, and ask her or him to consider your viewpoint.

After the Call or Meeting, Follow-Up and Stay in Contact…

15. In a timely fashion, follow-up with anything you promised the lawmaker or staffer.
16. Follow-up with the legislator or staffer to learn what action they took in response to your request.
17. Stay active, and try to maintain communication with your lawmakers or their staff, not just when you want something from them. Building relationships will pay off in the long run.

18. Keep us in the loop regarding your communications with lawmakers, promises they make, actions they take, and intel you gather from your communications with them. This will enable us to be as helpful as possible to you and lawmakers.

19. Be patient and persistent. Never be daunted. You can do this! Like all social change work, policy advocacy is a marathon, not a sprint. So find your stride and keep on!

20. Have fun – you are helping to affect real change!

*WCASA thanks partner organizations Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin and End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin, as some of these tips were adapted from materials produced by those organizations.

About Us

The Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault, Inc. (WCASA) is a membership agency comprised of 50 sexual assault service providers across the state, other organizations, and individuals working to end sexual violence in Wisconsin. WCASA works to ensure that every victim in Wisconsin gets the support and care they need. WCASA’s mission is to create the social change necessary to end sexual violence.

For more information, please contact:

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