



Outreach Etiquette and Best Practices

Suggestions for meeting with your legislative representatives

SCHEDULING A MEETING

- Be patient and flexible
- Ask for a half-hour meeting, but accept a shorter one
- Meet with staff if the legislator is unavailable
- Be proactive - don't wait for a crisis to meet
- Build relationships over time
- Schedule appointments in advance and keep them
- Don't just drop in for a surprise visit

PREPARING FOR A MEETING

- Research your legislator (background, interests, accomplishments & legislative priorities)
- Bring business cards and agency materials (fact sheets, etc.)

DURING THE MEETING

- Serve as the local expert on water
- Provide background and information on local water issues
- Develop relationships with staff, who can be your advocate from within
- Invite your legislator and their staff on a tour of your facilities and operations
- Ask them to include your water district on their mailing lists and offer to add them to your agency's lists
- Don't overload with information
- Keep written materials short, simple and relevant to your issue and agency
- Communicate in layman's terms
- Spell out water-related acronyms
- Be a good listener
- Don't monopolize the meeting, but allow the legislator to ask questions and express concerns
- Don't worry about having all the answers, but offer to follow up on a question if you don't have an answer during the meeting
- Stay focused on the issue at hand and try not to get sidetracked
- Don't mix policy with political campaigns (i.e. don't discuss past or future campaign contributions along with legislative action or votes)
- Don't be confrontational and avoid getting into arguments that could damage your relationship with your legislator over one vote or issue

AFTER THE MEETING

- Thank your legislator and staff with an email or handwritten note
- Be sure to follow up on any unresolved questions, concerns, or commitments made to the legislator or staff during the meeting
- Stay in touch with your legislator and staff throughout the year