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## Talking to your Legislators

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Legislators are representative of people throughout the state – some are smarter than you, some are not as smart – and they work for YOU. Article 1, Section 1 of the state Constitution says “*All political power is inherent in the people, and governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed, and are established to protect and maintain individual rights.*”

The only difference between a legislator and you is that they stood up and asked for the job, and a majority of the voters in their districts picked them. So, don't be afraid to speak up, share your knowledge, and let them know what you think!

### Tips for talking to legislators:

1. Make an appointment – during session, these are typically 15 minutes long.
2. Prepare notes – not a speech – ahead of time.
  - a. Who you are (if you are a constituent, make sure to tell them)
  - b. Your affiliation – there's strength in numbers in your organization
  - c. what expertise, if any, you have on the subject you're about to expound upon
  - d. What you want – including specifically asking them to vote for or against something.
3. Know who you're talking to – even if it is shallow knowledge (you can get the “baby book” from the Legislative information center with photos and brief biographies of each member).
4. Be a few minutes early – and be prepared to wait (they often are running behind)
5. Be courteous – even if you disagree with them
6. Be realistic – don't ask a freshman legislator to deliver the moon
7. Keep the pleasantries brief and get to the point.
8. Don't monopolize the conversation – be sure to give them a chance to respond and be sure to listen to what they have to say.
9. If you don't know the answer, don't fake it. “I'll find out and get back to you” is not only acceptable, it is preferable to guessing.
10. Thank them for their time and reiterate any promises they made. (“Thank you Senator Smith for agreeing to vote yes on the bill.”)
11. When you leave, make notes on the conversation so you have something to rely on later.
12. Send them a “thank you for meeting with me” note or e-mail.