



Guidelines for Meeting with your Legislators

Please follow these guidelines to ensure your meetings with legislators go smoothly. You will role-play a meeting with your lobby group during our training at lobby day.

Arriving at the legislator's office for your meeting:

- **Do not be late** to your meeting.
- Wait just outside the office (or meeting location) if staff is talking with someone else when you arrive – **do not interrupt** them.
- If/when the staff person is free, **introduce yourself**, letting them know you are with the ACLU and you have a meeting at "x" time.
- **Don't be surprised if you are asked to wait.** The legislator may be running late.

Important things to note:

- **You will only have 15 minutes or less for your meeting.** The time will pass very quickly. These guidelines are designed to help you make the most of that limited amount of time.
- **Legislators may want to ask questions, share their opinions, or they may just want to listen.** That means that your plan for the meeting might get sidetracked. That's OK! It is important to hear what legislators have to say and give them the opportunity to ask any questions after each issue. All of the information and questions they share will be helpful for us in our advocacy.
- If there are a large number of participants in the group, **each person may not get to speak at each meeting.** If that is the case, pick different people to speak at each meeting.
- In some cases, **you may not get to speak to all topics** due to time constraints. That is okay. If time runs out, tell them that the briefing papers you are leaving with them cover all our issues for today.
- **No one is required to talk**, but it is recommended.

- **Personal stories are often the most powerful** and persuasive way to engage legislators. If you have a personal story you are willing to share that relates to why an issue on our agenda is important to you, we highly encourage you to share it.
- We do not anticipate that anyone will experience a hostile reception from a legislator, but if a legislator does become argumentative, **do not get into an argument with them or attempt to engage in a debate.** That can unfortunately often be damaging to our efforts to bring them along. If they argue or push back against what you are saying, simply thank them for sharing their views and move on to the next issue.
- If legislator asks a question that you cannot answer that is okay. Do not make up an answer. Let them know you will **pass questions on to the ACLU of Oregon Policy Department**, Kimberly McCullough (Policy Director) and Ricardo Lujan (Policy Associate), and they will get back to them with an answer.
- **It's possible that your meeting will be with a staff person.** Please understand that this is not due to disrespect by the legislator. They are often called to other mandatory meetings and have conflicts arise that they cannot get out of. But **staff people are incredibly important** to our work, and they are crucial to getting our bills passed. Please be gracious and respectful if you are meeting with a staff person.

In the Meeting:

- Once everyone is seated (or gathered) with the legislator or staff person, go around in a circle and **introduce yourselves as a constituent** by stating your name and the town you live in (hold off on additional comments until later in the conversation). If you live in a larger city like Portland, Salem, or Eugene, you can share a big street intersection near your home.
- The **lobby leader** will:
 - **Thank the legislator** for the meeting,
 - Explain that all of you are here for the **ACLU of Oregon Lobby Day**,
 - Explain that the **participants would like to discuss some of ACLU's priority issues** and why those issues are important to them.
- **Each participant will take turns** (2-3 minutes maximum) lifting up some of our talking points and/or why a particular issue on our agenda is important to them.
- **If legislator is a sponsor** of one of the bills, a participant speaking about that issue should **thank them** for their support.

- **Ask legislator where they stand** if it is not clear to you. Do not be surprised that in some cases they may choose not to take a clear position. Do not press them to take one during your meeting.
- **Leave the legislator (or staff person) with copies** of the ACLU briefing paper for each issue.
- **Thank them** for their time and attention to our issues.

After the Meeting:

- **Find an appropriate location to debrief** the meeting. Pick somewhere that is out of earshot of the office you left and where you can have a reasonable amount of privacy for your conversation. Remember that there are many people in the Capitol who are connected with each of the legislators and with people who may oppose our priorities, so it is best to have conversations that are not broadcast to other people.
- **Each person should fill out a report** on meeting (including any questions that require follow-up). We want to hear all of your impressions of the meetings.
- **Write a brief Thank You note on the card that is in your folder. We have provided a sample outline for your message.**
- **Turn in your forms to an ACLU of Oregon staff** before the end of the day.

Finding Your Legislator's Office

You will be likely entering the building through the doors facing State Street. If you turn to your right, you can follow the long hallway down to the Senate side of the building. Or if you turn to your left, you can follow the long hallway down to the House side of the building. Once you reach the end of that long hallway, take the elevator up to the corresponding floor.

Legislators have offices on the second, third, and fourth floors of the building. The best way to find them is to look at the office number. For example, if your legislator has their office listed as H-480, it means the office is on the 4th floor on the House side, so take the elevator up to the fourth floor. Once you step out, turn around to face the elevator. There are signs on either side of the elevator's exterior, identifying where the legislator's office is located on that floor.

If you are early to a legislator meeting, check in with the staff assistant and either wait in the hallway outside their office or sit in the lobby area near the elevators. Do not knock on the legislator's door if no one is there.

Capitol Etiquette

If you see a legislator walking alone you can say hi to them. But if a legislator is talking to someone else, particularly another lobbyist or constituent, simply wait until they are done and say “Senator” or “Representative” to get their attention.

When the Senate or House is in full session on the Floor, you cannot pass through the chambers on the second floor. You can still access offices from the first floor, by way of the third floor balcony, or walking all the way up to the fourth floor.

What do to Between Meetings

We have arranged free tours of the Capitol for you. Tours leave from the Visitor’s Information Desk on the first floor of the building. Tours leave at 1:30 pm and 2:30 pm, and last for half-an-hour. Please check in at the Visitor’s Information Desk, which is next to the Gift Shop.

The basement has a café where you can buy coffee and sandwiches. You can eat/drink wherever in the building but don’t set up a picnic.

The wi-fi username is “Capitol-Guest” and you do not need a password to login

This is your Capitol, so most areas that are not an office are free game to wait around in. The rotunda and the hallways outside of the ground floor hearings rooms have benches for folks to congregate. There are also couches and work areas on the second and third floors, outside of the House and Senate chambers.

You can attend the Floor Session for the House or the Senate. The House and the Senate will convene in the morning to speak and vote on bills. You can watch the proceedings from the House Gallery and the Senate Gallery, both of which are on the third floor of the Capitol. Please enter quietly and take a seat. Using a cell phone in the Gallery is strictly forbidden. Do not be disruptive.

In between meetings, you are welcome to attend a committee hearing. This is an excellent opportunity to watch lawmakers discuss policies and legislation. You can attend any of the committees listed below, and the agendas (including which bills the committee will discuss) are posted on the wall next to the Visitor’s Information Desk. Once you enter the room for a committee hearing, take a seat on a bench to watch the proceedings. Please remain quiet throughout the hearing so that lawmakers can discuss the bills. And please do not speak on the bill, since it could be misinterpreted as the ACLU taking a position on legislation.