

Texas Impact's Ten Commandments of Legislative Visits

1. Thou shalt not knock.

Seriously. Just walk right in if it's the Capitol office, it's the culture. You'll be cool.

2. Thou shalt not fail to introduce thyself.

State your name, your hometown, and any other connection to the district like a faith community or an employer.

3. Thou shalt not have unrealistic expectations.

Do not be offended if you meet with a staffer. They are the legislator's brain on policy. Also, those offices are small. If the meeting is in the hall, especially if it's a large group, do not be insulted.

4. Thou shalt not fail to read the room.

Is there a high level of stress? Are people freaking out? If so, offer to come back in 10-15 minutes.

5. Thou shalt not be a jerk.

Always be polite. No exceptions. There is a difference between being principled and being anti-social. Do not argue. Agree to disagree.

6. Thou shalt not threaten.

The next election is the elephant in the room. Everyone knows it. If you ask for

a vote on a bill and the answer is no, don't threaten revenge. If the answer is yes, pledge to thank the legislator and support the vote back in the district.

7. Thou shalt not exceed 5 minutes.

But you drove four hours? They know. It's about the effort you took, not the length of the visit.

**Exception to this commandment: if the staffer is talking, then stay put and listen... before you leave, get a picture of yourself with the staffer and tweet it!*

8. Thou shalt not forget to fill out a legislative visit evaluation form.

Democracy is a team effort. Your grassroots group's lobby team needs and appreciates the information.

9. Thou shalt not forget a thank you note.

This lost art is not only an important courtesy—it reinforces your visit by reminding the office who you are.

10. Thou shalt not be "one & done."

Democracy is a way of life. Vote every November...and in the primaries. Make district visits in the interim. Join civic organizations, and teach other folks how to develop their civic skills. Now who's the advocacy pro? (You, that's who!)