

# Meeting with your legislator



*A guide to setting up in-person meetings with legislative offices*

Meeting in person with legislators and their staffs is a crucial part of citizen leadership, so it's worth taking the time to do some advance preparation.

## Before the Meeting

Get fact sheets on your issues from Texas Impact or other advocacy groups. Many organizations post fact sheets on their websites. If you are meeting about a bill that has already been filed, download the latest version from the state website.

## Download Bills from the Texas Legislature Website

- If you know your bill number, go to [capitol.texas.gov](http://capitol.texas.gov). You can download and print the bill text, as well as supporting information like the fiscal impact statement. You can also check where the bill is in the legislative process and sign up to be notified of any actions taken on the bill.
- If you don't know your bill number, you can search on [capitol.texas.gov](http://capitol.texas.gov) by author or key words.

## Roles: Yours and Theirs

If you are going with a group to your legislative meeting, arrange ahead of time which role each person will play. If you have time, it's a good idea to do a roleplaying exercise, especially if one or more members of the group are inexperienced.

- **Facilitator**—Introduces the group and manages the flow of conversation. The facilitator should also know the bill well and be able to comfortably discuss the talking points for the group.
- **Personal Stories**—One or two people should share their personal reasons for supporting the bill or issue
- **Note Taker**—Someone should always focus completely on taking notes of what the legislator says. This person is usually silent during the course of the meeting. Their only job is to write down everything that goes on.
- **Silent Supporters**—In large groups, not everyone will speak. Some people can be there just to lend their support and show strong constituent support for the legislation or issue.



The legislator's staff have roles, too. Knowing who you're meeting with will help you prepare.

- Chief of Staff—oversees the member's staff in the Capitol office and sometimes also in the district office. Often a key political advisor to the legislator.
- Executive Assistant—Handles appointments and scheduling, helps the chief of staff with office administration, keeps things running smoothly.
- Legislative Director—Supervises the legislative staff, responsible for legislative proposals, floor work, issue oversight, etc.
- Legislative Assistant—Typically track specific issues areas and bills the legislator authors that fall in those issue areas.
- Press Secretary—Publicity director; responsible for preparing press releases, speeches, etc.
- District Staff—Sometimes function only in political capacity, in other cases handle policy issues. Legislators who live in or near Austin typically do not have separate district offices, but do all their work at the Capitol.

**Sample letter for making an appointment**

Dear Representative  
(Senator)\_\_\_\_\_:

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I live at \_\_\_\_\_ . I would like to request an appointment with you or a member of your staff on (date). I would like an opportunity to discuss with you (the issue or bill you want to discuss). Please respond to me at (list phone/fax/e-mail contact information). (Add any other personal information/comments that might be appropriate.)

Sincerely, (give your name and full address)

**Contacting by mail:**

For any Texas state representative:

The Honorable John Doe  
P.O. Box 2910 Austin, Texas 78711

For any Texas state senator:

The Honorable Jane Doe  
P.O. Box 12068 Austin, Texas 78711

**Sample phone script for making an appointment**

Hi! I'm \_\_\_\_\_, from \_\_\_\_\_ . I will be in Austin on (date), and would like an appointment to meet with Governor \_\_\_\_\_/Senator \_\_\_\_\_/ Representative \_\_\_\_\_ to discuss (the policy issue or bill you want to discuss). I would be more than happy to meet with the legislative assistant who works on (your issue) if the (elected official) is unavailable. Is someone available the afternoon of the (date of your visit)? If no one is available, I would like to drop by the office anyway to leave some information for the (elected official) to review.

**Contacting by phone:**

Find your state representative's phone number on the Texas House of Representatives website at [house.texas.gov](http://house.texas.gov)

Find your state senator's phone number on the Texas Senate website at [senate.texas.gov](http://senate.texas.gov)

No internet access? Call Capitol information at 512.463.0063 for any legislator's phone number.