

# If You Don't Like The Law, Change It: An External Perspective



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# Thank You Veterans!!!



Thank you for your courage, dedication and commitment to protecting the freedoms we enjoy today.

Thank you to all the military families for their support, resilience and the sacrifices they have made.

# Today's Agenda

- Strategies for Success
- A Word About Influence
- Connecting with your legislators
- Scheduling the Meeting
- Preparing for the Meeting
- The Meeting
- After the Meeting
- Final Thoughts
- Questions???



# **“THERE IS NO BETTER FRIEND THAN A CONSTITUENT”**

- You should first concentrate on the State and Federal Legislators and Congress members in your district where your HOME is.

# Strategies for Success: Know Your Legislators

- Relationships Matter
- Meet Legislators before they are elected
- Know their committee assignments
- Provide positive media relations opportunities
- Help them with their constituents



 **AMERICAN  
LEGION**

# Strategies for Success: Know Their Legislative Staff

- Get to know their Chief of Staff, Legislative Director and Schedulers—they are key players
- Staff have significant influence
- They “get stuff done” !!



# Strategies for Success: When You Meet Your Legislator

- The Four Big B's
  - Be On Time
  - Be Prepared
  - Be Respectful
  - Be Passionate
- Bring your business card
- Bring succinct, well written handouts
- Always follow up with a thank you



# Strategies for Success: Don't Wait For a Crisis



- Establish relationships early
- Develop confidence and trust
- Become a subject expert for your Legislator
- Your rapid response matters



# Strategies for Success: Transform Solutions into Legislation

- Timing is everything
- The power of cosponsors
- Having support matters



# Strategies for Success: Transform Solutions into Legislation

- You know the problems and solutions
- Develop the story
- Find a champion
- Create the white paper



# Strategies for Success: The Power of Cosponsors

- The more, the better
- Should be Bi-Partisan. Talk to the Primary Sponsor to get their thoughts first.
- Geography matters
- Connect cosponsors to key committees



# Strategies for Success: Transform Solutions into Legislation



## Why Support Matters:

- The value of VSO's
- Other key groups
- Letters of support

# Strategies for Success: Timing is Everything

- Learn and understand legislative schedules
- Introduce bills in a timely manner
- Recognize time limits  
(i.e. Legislative calendars)



# A Word About Influence...

## Key Factors on Influencing

- Act deliberately
- Connect the dots
- Have high expectations
- Constantly analyze



# A Word About Influence...

## Key Factors on Influencing

- Inspire at all times
- Exude confidence
- Practice awareness
- Remain humble & grateful



# CONNECTING WITH YOUR LEGISLATORS

## Face-to-Face Meeting

- Best way to share your concerns
- Influence important decisions
- Educate your Legislator
- Represent yourself, not the America Legion (unless you have followed the procedure)





# SCHEDULING THE VISIT

- You don't have to travel to the Capital to meet with your Legislator
- Schedule a meeting before or after the daily session begins
- Legislators spend most of their time in their home district when the legislature is not in session. This is a good time to set up a meeting, and one on one is the best in this case also.



# SCHEDULING THE VISIT

- Face-face meetings are a little more difficult to obtain. You must remain flexible and may have to meet with staff only.
- During the session, legislators (and some of their key staff) constantly meet with lobbyists, constituents, and other legislators while also attending hearings, floor voting schedules, etc.
- Anderson House Office Building (Representatives) just east of the Capitol building.
- Senate Office Building 201 S. Townsend St. (Senators) just south of the Capitol building.
- Some of the leadership has offices in the Capitol building.



# SCHEDULING THE VISIT

- Legislative staff members are a trusted voice in the ear of the legislator.
- If your legislator decides to adopt one of your causes, it is the staff that will do much of the work. Get the contact information of staff it is the staff you will be working with.



# SCHEDULING THE VISIT

Before you call, be prepared to answer the following questions:

- Names of the people attending the meeting!
- Keep it small and personal.
- No more than 3 people (2 is best).  
Legislative offices are not set up for large groups.

What do You Wish to Discuss?



# PREPARING FOR THE MEETING

- A typical meeting with your legislator (or staff member) will be scheduled for between 15-30 minutes.
- If more than one person is attending, agree on your message beforehand.



# PREPARING FOR THE MEETING

- Don't try to solve all your issues in one visit.
- Present only those issues (not more than 2) of the greatest concern to you.
- Presenting too many issues may be overwhelming for the legislator and the staff.



# PREPARING FOR THE MEETING

Prepare to leave-behind packet:

- Contact information for all attendees.
- Supporting Document-Research, Facts, Data, and News Articles.
- Letters or Resolutions from Department and or other constituents.



# PREPARING FOR THE MEETING

- Keep in mind, there is a good chance that your legislator isn't very familiar with the issues you will be discussing.
- Be ready to answer questions. If you do not know the answer, tell them you will get back with the answer. **DO NOT GUESS; YOU WILL JUST HURT YOUR CREDITABILITY! MAKE SURE YOU GET THEM THE ANSWER.**





# THE MEETING

- Be on time, positive, and friendly.
- Begin the visit by introducing yourself- and if you are a constituent, say so!
- Thank the legislator (or staff member) for meeting with you.



# THE MEETING

- Present your topic- keep it simple and straightforward.
- Use your story to illustrate points.
- Keep personal stories short, to the point and Basic.
- Do not go into lengthy details. If the legislator or staff member wants to know more, they will ask.



# THE MEETING

- Inform the legislator/staff of the specific legislation which you would like to see filed during the session or the specific legislation you would like for them to oppose.
- If the session is already in progress, express your support or opposition to specific bills and provide an explanation of why such a measure is good or bad public policy. If you know of unintended consequences, give them examples.



# THE MEETING

- Be specific about what you are asking for.
- Offer possible solutions.
- Don't overstay your welcome. Look for signs that the legislator/staff member is ready to conclude the meeting.
- Conclude the visit by extending the appropriate thank you



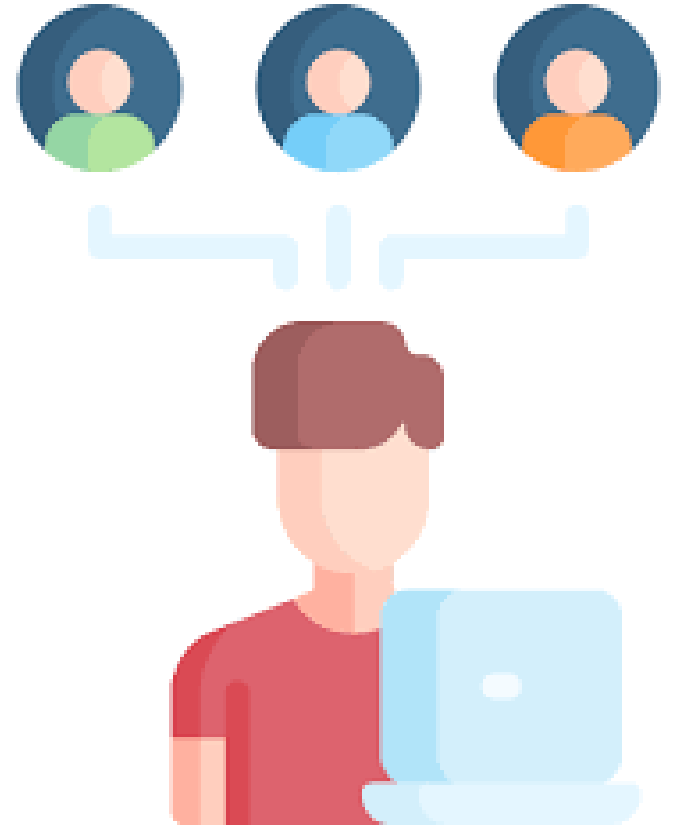
# THE MEETING

- Offer to be a resource for your legislator.
- Write down the names of staff members.  
(Or get their business card).



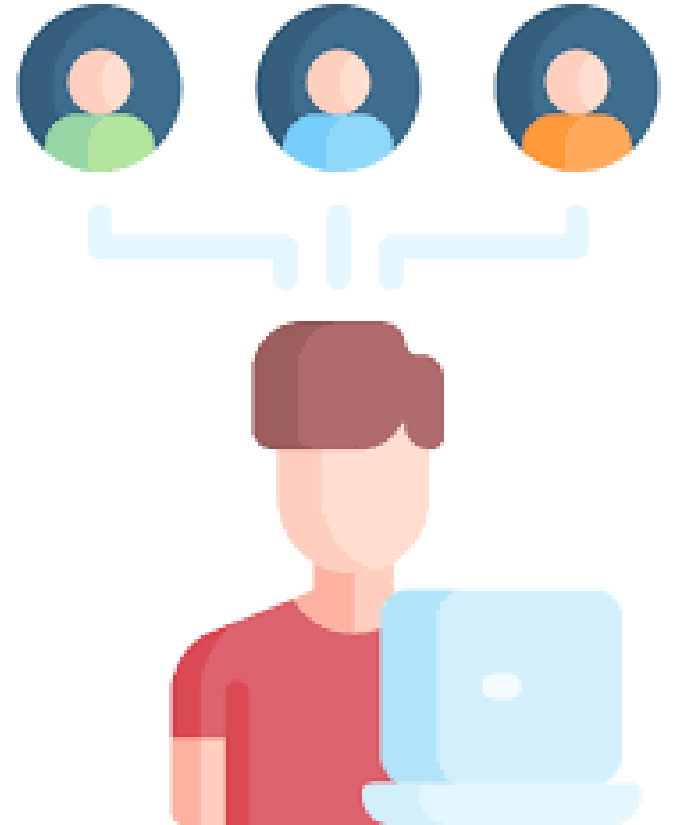
# AFTER THE MEETING

- Send a sincere thank you note, letter or email.
- Email, snail mail, or drop off any additional information that may have been requested.
- Follow up with office visits, phone calls, and emails. (Do not overdo this one, however.)



# AFTER THE MEETING

Continue your connection with the legislator and staff Members.



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## Final Thoughts

I never say why...I like to say why not...





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## Final Thoughts

The squeaky wheel gets the oil...



# If You Don't Like The Law, Change It: An External Perspective

## Final Thoughts

**Never, Never, Never Give Up!!!**



# If You Don't Like The Law, Change It: An External Perspective

## Questions???

