

DOs and DON'Ts for Visiting Legislators – Association of Texas Midwives

DO:

A little research about the legislator. Know their political party, committee assignments, history/biographical information, and special interests. If you share them, let them know, but make it quick and move onto the reason you're there.

Look professional. You don't need to wear a suit, but business casual dress is helpful. Address the legislator by the appropriate title. Have your information well organized.

Share any relevant credentials you have and that you live or work in their district (if you do).

Stick to your talking points. Be professional, courteous, positive, direct, clear, concise, factual, credible and specific

Ask for a commitment if you are visiting about a specific bill.

Thank legislators for meeting with you and for their consideration, even if your comments are not well received. Send a thank you note and follow-up with promised answers or materials in a timely manner.

Report back to ATM or TfM with a summary of your meeting, follow-up questions, and contact information.

Attend legislative hearings, committee meetings, budget mark-up sessions, and floor votes on your issues, if appropriate. Say hi to staffers you recognize – wearing an organizational t-shirt can help them remember you.

DON'T:

Be late if you have an appointment. Legislators are on tight schedules and may have to cancel your meeting. Plus, it's rude and makes you and your organization look bad. Also, don't interrupt if they are obviously busy.

Get sidetracked to other subjects. Stick with your message.

Share details of your birth story or pregnancy. Generalizations are fine, but never details. If you are unsure what is appropriate, discuss with an organizer before your meeting.

Criticize doctors or hospitals or opponents. Stay positive!

Get too technical. Answer questions but don't get too detailed with technical information.

Argue with a legislator or staff. Don't be rude or threaten. Don't get into politics. Just reiterate your point, offer to connect them with someone with more information, and thank them for their time.

Send form letters. Use talking points but always add personal touches so they know you actually know about the issue as a constituent. Don't write letters over 1 page.