



## FIRST

**Register to vote.** It matters. Officials and their staff will check to see if you are registered or not. If you are not a registered voter, you risk undermining your own credibility.

## KNOW YOUR CONTACT

Legislators represent people based on where they live, not where they work. Use the General Assembly's "[Find Your Legislator](#)" search to find the right contacts. If you approach the wrong official, expect them to refer you to your district's contact. Read up on your legislators via their public profile on the [Pa. General Assembly website](#). Connect with them via Facebook. Join their email list for constituent communications.

## BE PREPARED

Have your policy talking points or elevator speech prepared. Be concise, focused and relatable. Don't expect to chat for an hour about your issues. Officials deal with a wide variety of issues, from health care to criminal law to property taxes, and everything in between. Have one main issue to discuss and no more than three.

## THE MEETING

Meet in person with your legislator in their district office; meeting face-to-face with legislative staff is fine as well. If you've no time to meet, make a call. No time to call? Email is okay, but a letter is better.

Be polite and courteous at all times. Uncivil discourse is too commonplace these days; you must take the high road. Make a new friend. Build trust and credibility. Be a resource: offer to answer any questions they have about your topic or some other matter they're facing. Good relationships are a two-way, transactional affair, and as important in advocacy as in family medicine!

Be honest. Don't be afraid to answer a question with "I don't know, but I'll find out," and follow up with that new information. Too many people engaged in public policy give inaccurate information; don't risk your credibility by being one of them.

The "Ask": The ask is not "I demand you support" this, the ask is "I hope you will consider supporting" this and here's why. Don't expect, suggest. If you are going to discuss a bill, make sure you read the bill beforehand. Use the "[find legislation](#)" search on the General Assembly Website.

Say thank you. Public life is more challenging than most people understand. Elected officials constantly deal with complaints, problems, and adversaries while attempting to know all they can and do right by their constituents.

## USE SOCIAL MEDIA FOR GOOD

All of the above applies on social media, too. Be an authority; be credible, trustworthy and gracious. Avoid sensational stories and questionable sources. Choose your issues wisely. Still, face-to-face is most effective for building relationships. Follow leaders like @DrWandaFiler for strong examples of social media use; observe how she has cultivated her presence with authority and chosen her "follows" carefully.