



How to Meet with Your Legislator

A personal meeting with your legislator is one of the best ways to show you care about the University of Minnesota. Use these tips to help make your visit a success.

Requesting Your Meeting

Call your legislator's office to request a meeting. Be sure to say you are a constituent. Suggest times and dates for your meeting, and let them know what issue you wish to discuss.

Before the Meeting

Log on: Visit the Legislative Network web site (www.supporttheU.umn.edu) to find advocacy tips and talking points, and to download materials to give your legislator.

Prepare: You do not need to be an expert about your issue to have a great meeting, but you should know why your issue matters, what you want to say, and what your goals are.

At the Meeting

Arrive 5 to 10 minutes early to meet the staff members in the office. Take a moment to think through your approach to the meeting, and choose someone in your group to take notes. Also, be patient – legislators are very busy and can be delayed.

A good meeting will accomplish three goals: you will engage the legislator, educate him or her about your issue, and enlist him or her in your cause.

Engage: All visitors should introduce themselves warmly. If possible, mention a personal, professional, or political connection you may have to the legislator. Thank the legislator for meeting with you and for his or her support on past issues, if appropriate.

Educate: Briefly, clearly and politely ask your legislator for his or her support on your issue. Always provide personal or local examples to make your case—these can be powerful. Stay on topic, as well: you never know when your meeting might be cut short.

Let your legislator ask questions as you go along, and listen closely to what the legislator says. Do not get discouraged if the legislator seems to disagree with you. Instead, recognize his or her concerns about the issue and clarify your points politely.

Be honest. If you cannot answer a question, assure your legislator that you will find the answer and deliver it right away. This allows you to contact them again about the issue. Never make up answers—giving incorrect information hurts your credibility.

Enlist: Thank your legislator for listening to you. If the meeting goes well, ask the legislator if you may count on his or her support for your issue. Confirm any additional information you may have promised to find. Leave no more than five pages of materials behind.

After the Meeting

Review your meeting notes right away to confirm details. To help the University's cause and to help answer any questions, please give a copy of your notes to Legislative Network staff.

Send a thank-you letter to the legislator and his or her staff. Restate your understanding of the legislator's position and thank them for any support expressed during the meeting. Answer any questions the legislator had. If the meeting was inconclusive, provide a summary of your position and any new information that supports it.

In Review: Keys to a Successful Visit

- Your goal is to engage, educate and enlist the legislator in your cause.
- Arrive on time.
- Be ready to share your personal story about why your University of Minnesota issue matters to you.
- Always be friendly, polite, direct and honest.
- Listen well and take good notes about the meeting.
- Thank the legislator for his or her time and be sure to follow up on any requests for information—remember to send a thank-you card.
- Share your meeting feedback with Legislative Network staff.