



## Meeting with your Legislator

Often when thinking about advocacy, we think about someone else speaking on our behalf and putting a voice to our concerns. But how much more powerful would it be if the person who was fighting for a cause found their own voice and spoke for themselves? An individual meeting with your legislator is one of the most influential and effective means to advocate for elder economic security. By following these easy steps, you can be fully prepared to tackle your meeting without breaking a sweat!

- **Know what you are asking for:** Establish a concrete ask, whether it's a piece of legislation you want him/her to sponsor or reject or an issue you would like him/her to highlight.
- **Determine how you will ask for it:** Start off with some of the issues the legislator cares about, politically and personally, to make your ask more attractive. For example, determine what committee he/she is on or if he/she has any personal connection to your ask. Building a relationship is crucial.
- **Schedule your meeting:** If you are a constituent, you should first presume that you are asking for a meeting with the legislator. But if you are directed to staff, don't get upset; seek to make the meeting as productive as possible. Remember, you are building a relationship and the staff members can help you achieve your goals.
  - Call and explain who you are and the purpose of seeking a meeting.
  - Ask how the office handles scheduling of meetings.
  - Ensure that you speak to the right person.
- **Prepare for the meeting:** Remember to get there a few minutes early, dress nicely, open the meeting with a smile and keep in mind you are building a relationship. We also suggest posing questions regarding elder economic security that foster discussion. Sample questions include:
  - What policies can you implement to ensure the economic security of our seniors and their families?
  - What can you do to increase the supply and affordability of housing for low-income seniors?
  - What do you propose to increase the affordability of health care for elders?
- **Execute:** Follow the Three C's:
  - *Connection:* Start with a personal connection. Why is this issue important to you? Get them talking – ask them how much they know about the issue.
  - *Content:* Deliver your talking points based on their level of knowledge/position.
  - *Commitment:* Ask your legislator to commit to a particular action. Tell him or her you will follow up with them.
- **Expect the unexpected:** Be fully prepared to answer any questions on the topic you are there to discuss. If you don't know an answer, don't make it up. Follow up with the answer after you have investigated the question. Additionally, remember to be flexible with your time as meetings, cancellations and delayed starts are common.
- **Follow up:** If you do not follow up, it is like the meeting never happened! Follow up is critical. Follow-ups can take the form of thank-you e-mails or letters for the meeting, sending information the staffer requested, sending updates on any developments on issues discussed and asking for answers from staffers to any of your questions.

We hope that if you meet with policy makers that you will be inspired to further your cause and increase awareness by sharing your knowledge and experience with others.

To find out more about how to advocate for elder economic security, please visit [wowonline.org](http://wowonline.org) or contact Matt Unrath at (202) 464-1596 or [munrath@wowonline.org](mailto:munrath@wowonline.org).