

TIPS FOR TALKING WITH YOUR LEGISLATORS

DENTAL ACTION DAY 2019

Thank you for taking time to be in Olympia to meet with legislators. It matters that you're here! Please review the following tips to prepare for your meetings today.

Be prompt and patient. When possible, please arrive at your appointment at least five minutes early, but be prepared to wait. Legislators are in meetings from early in the morning until late at night, which means that they are often running behind schedule. They may even have to reschedule the appointment or be interrupted during the meeting.

Be courteous to the staff. Legislative assistants are important conduits to your legislators and their opinions of you count. Sometimes, legislators depend on their staff to meet with you when they are unavailable.

Introduce yourself. Provide a business card to the legislator and/or the legislative assistant if you have one. When the meeting begins, share who you are and that you are there for WSDA's Dental Action Day. Offer brief details about your work and as a constituent (if you are meeting with your local legislator).

Be respectful. Address the legislators as "Representative" or "Senator."

Make the most of your time. Meetings typically last 15 minutes. Decide in advance who will lead the discussion and what key points to make. Be prepared and be succinct when making your key points.

Stay focused. Think of the two or three key messages you want to share with your legislator. If you are talking about a specific bill, reference the bill number (HB XXXX/SB XXXX). Thank them for their willingness to listen and ask for their support (or opposition) to the bill.

Be specific. Give specific examples of how an issue or legislation affects you, your association, and your legislator's constituents back home.

Be honest. If you do not know the answer to a question, let your legislator know that the WSDA lobby team will follow up. Take notes on any questions and be sure to pass them on to WSDA so the lobbyists can respond in a timely manner.

Do not argue. You may disagree with the legislator or even each other on an issue or a specific bill. Recognize the official position of the WSDA when there is one. Always be respectful to each other and to the lawmakers. Respond politely, agree to disagree, and move on.

Be a resource. Offer yourself as a resource to the legislator and his or her staff in responding to follow-up questions.

Leave materials. Leave a copy of the WSDA's one-pager(s) for the legislator to review. However, remember that they get a lot of paper during the day, so do not overwhelm them. Leave the primary position paper and any others that were specific to the conversation, as appropriate. Copies will be distributed at the briefing breakfast and available in the tent throughout out the day.

Thank them. Legislators are extremely busy. Thank them at the beginning of the meeting and again when the meeting concludes. Consider sending a follow-up thank you note or email.

If you are not with a legislator, consider stopping into an active committee hearing. Have fun today and enjoy seeing the legislative process in action!