



Several committee members recently attend the “Woman’s Day at the Capitol” event sponsored by the Florida Commission on the Status of Women. This two day event provided some useful information that I wanted to share with you. The most important time to talk to an elected official is when they are at home in your local area. Go to town hall meetings and discuss your issues with them there. Schedule meetings to talk with them one on one. Establish a relationship with them that is more than just about your issue, let them know how much you appreciate them serving your area. Also, understand that these are pretty busy folks, and sometimes they will be called away. If this happens, talk with their staff, many times these are the ones that research the issues and give the Official the facts needed for him or her to support your position. Here are some specific tips for meeting with your officials.

Tips on How to Speak with Your Elected Official

Prior to the Meeting:

- Identify your main message-What is your issue.
- If more than one person is going to the meeting, determine what each person will do. (One to open and close the meeting and others to present topics or issues)
- No one should talk more than 5 minutes.
- Learn about the Official you are visiting-background (education, occupation, etc.), ties to state or local organizations, who influences this person, etc.
- It is ‘OK’ to visit Officials that you know will tell you “no”. You are still providing them information that may cause them to change their minds down the road.

During the Meeting:

- Introduce all those attending the meeting.
- Start with thanking them for their public service.
- State clearly and concisely what the issue is you wish to discuss. Do not lecture.
- Make a connection-how it affects their local voters
- Bring a ‘leave behind’ document-one page brief fact sheet outlining your position
- Drop names-other organizations, individuals that support your position
- Be a good listener-allow the Public Official to respond or ask questions
- Don’t answer a question if you don’t know, it is OK to say you will get back to them with the information. BUT, be sure to follow up with the information requested.
- Ask a direct question that the official can respond ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to, “Can we count on you to sponsor a bill?”
- Thank the Official for their time.

After the Meeting:

- Write down your impressions of the meeting.

- Follow up with a 'thank you for your time' letter.
- Report back to your group the results of the meeting.

Also, the ***Florida Constitution Revision Commission*** has begun the process of recommending changes to the Florida Constitution. This is done every 20 years and now is your opportunity to submit issues you believe should be addressed. For more information on this process go to: <http://www.revisefl.com>.

Don't forget to sign up for Legislative Alerts from GFWC.