



Tip Sheet

# Advocacy Checklist

## Your Advocacy Checklist

**Is my elected official the best place to start?** I have figured out that I want:

- Casework: I need help with a particular government program (social security, or the IRS, for example)
- Policy Representation: I want my representative or senator to take a position on a certain state or federal issue

### Background Research

- Who are my representatives and senators?
- What is their legislative record and general philosophy?
- What issues are they passionate about?
- What committees are my representatives or senators on?
- Is my representative or senator newly elected, or more senior?
- What party does my representative or senator belong to?

### Message Development

- Tell a compelling story -- you have something of value to contribute!
- Know your facts
- Make your message your own
- Be positive

### General Message Delivery

*These tips apply to all communications – letters, phone calls, and meetings.*

- Decide which method of communication suits you and your purpose
- Develop a thoughtful, well-argued message
- Ask your member to take a specific action
- Ask your member to respond to the request
- Make your priorities clear
- Tell your legislator's office how you can be an ongoing resource
- Make your message targeted and forceful without being rude or threatening
- Tell the truth
- Be reasonable about opposing points of view
- Be prepared to answer questions about opposing arguments



## **Effective Meetings**

- Determine whether a meeting is needed to deliver the message
- Decide where you want to meet, after looking at the legislative calendar
- Decide who you want to deliver your message (preferably someone from the district)
- Limit the number of people you bring to the meeting
- If you're in DC for a national meeting, try to coordinate with others from your state
- Fax the scheduler a meeting request, including a list of issues and attendees
- Follow-up with a phone call to the scheduler after sending a written request
- Schedule carefully to assure you will be on time, but not too early, for each meeting
- On voting days, try to schedule meetings with members before 11:00 A.M.
- Be prepared to meet anywhere – standing in the hallway or on the run to a vote
- Be prepared to deliver your message in five minutes
- Make sure you have short, concise and consistent information to leave behind
- Leave your information in a file folder with your organization's name on the label

## **Effective Written Communications**

- Make your communication stand out by making it personal, thoughtful and accurate
- Ask for a response
- Confine each written communication to one topic
- Double check office numbers, fax numbers and e-mail addresses

## **Effective Phone Calls**

- If you want someone to think about what you're saying, ask for a response
- Have the basic facts about the issue on hand

## **Following Up**

- Send a thank you note to the staff and your legislator soon after a meeting
- Wait at least three weeks for a response before checking back
- Report on your meeting in a non-threatening way

Get more tips for communicating with your elected officials by contacting your county Farm Bureau or visiting [www.ilfb.org/fbact](http://www.ilfb.org/fbact).