



HOW-TO: IN-DISTRICT MEETING WITH STATE LEGISLATOR

This guide outlines how to plan a meeting with a state legislator (senator or representative) in his/her home district, as opposed to meeting at the State Capitol in Nashville. This example is relevant for Congressional in-district meetings, too. The benefits of meeting with your legislator in the home district includes being able to have more constituents attend, meeting at a familiar venue, and having more uninterrupted time with the lawmaker. An in-district meeting may last from 30 minutes to an hour, while a meeting at Legislative Plaza during session is likely to be no more than 15 minutes. Suggested number of constituents participating: 5-15.

Points & Steps to Consider:

1. **What is the purpose of the meeting?** An effective meeting should focus on one key area with no more than three sub-points. Remember, your meeting should last no more than one hour and you want to have time for significant discussion with everyone getting a chance to participate.
2. **Determine the state senator and state representative** for each member of the group and get legislator contact info (either from THCC or at State Legislative web site @ <http://www.legislature.state.tn.us/>)
3. **Decide on single or joint lawmaker meeting.** See if the group wants to meet with the state senator and state representative separately or jointly.
4. **Pick date & time.** Choose three (3) dates and times convenient to group members. E.g., Sat. 10/6 - 10 am; Tues. 10/9 - 6 pm; or Thur., 10/11 - 3pm. The legislator will be asked to choose from one of these dates to meet with constituents.
5. **Select a venue.** The legislator's office is a likely choice, but not all legislators have district offices. The public library or a quiet place that serves soft beverages* also work. *Do not pick a bustling sit-down restaurant like Ruby Tuesday or O'Charley's (you do not want to have a meal, you want to talk issues) or a place with loud music or a busy crowd (Starbuck's, for instance, is not a good choice).
6. **Who will make the call?** Determine who in the group is going to call the legislator.
7. **Call the legislator & set up the meeting.** Introduce yourself as his or her constituent and as a volunteer representative of the Tennessee Health Care Campaign. You are calling to see if s/he would be available to meet with X-number of constituents to discuss PURPOSE of MEETING. Offer the suggested dates, times, and venues. *The legislator may offer other suggestions.* If they differ much from what the group has initially agreed to, tell her/him you will check with the group and get back with her/him. (Sample phone script follows.)



Working for affordable access to high-quality health care for all Tennesseans

SAMPLE PHONE SCRIPT – Scheduling a Meeting to Discuss Comptroller’s Report

Hello, my name is _____, I’m a constituent of Sen. Crowe and a volunteer with the Tennessee Health Care Campaign. May I please speak with Sen. Crowe?*

Hello, Senator, I’m calling on behalf of a group of ten constituents who would like to meet with you to discuss our concerns and hear your thoughts about health care as it relates to the uninsured and state policy, and we want to share some common-sense ideas presented in a recent report by Comptroller John Morgan’s office entitled, “Financing Health Care for the Uninsured.” Would you be available to meet with us on Saturday, October 6 at 10 a.m. at your office? ... Your office won’t work? OK, how about same time at Joe’s Coffee House? Saturday’s no good? How about Tuesday at 6 p.m at Joe’s? That works? Great! I’ll email the date, time, and place to your office along with the link to the Comptroller’s report. On behalf of the group, we look forward to meeting with you next week.

**If you get the lawmaker’s assistant, you will relate the same info and ask for a reply by a certain date (a day or two after the call) and follow-up the call with an email to the legislator relating the conversation.*