

Meeting With Elected Officials

Most lawmakers welcome the opportunity to meet with constituents and issue experts and are willing to listen to their information. Prior to the meeting, please connect with your American Heart Association staff partner to receive the latest information on the issue. Then familiarize yourself with the information you plan to share.

The HEART meeting:

H – Hello. Start with a smile and a warm hello. Thank the lawmaker (and staff!) for seeing you.

E – Engage. Get your lawmaker's attention by connecting as their constituent or the issue expert and share your story.

A – Ask. Make the "ask" – what action do you want from the lawmaker? Provide the lawmaker information they may keep.

R – Remember. Be respectful of the lawmaker and their staff. They may not agree with you and they may have questions. If you don't know the answer, make a note of their question and share it with your American Heart Association staff partner, so there can be timely follow up. Do not guess at answers – it's critical we provide correct information.

T – Thank. Make sure to thank the lawmaker and/or staff for meeting with you and let them know you will follow up with them.

Tips for success:

- ♥ Before the meeting: Arrive 10-15 minutes before your appointment to meet with your group. Review your talking points and request, as well as what each person will contribute to the meeting. Assign one person to begin the meeting and one person to end the meeting.
- ♥ Introductions: Everyone should briefly introduce themselves and mention that they're constituents. Consider sharing a few unique details to show your group represents a broad cross-section from the district.
- ♥ Local Stories and Statistics: Provide the lawmaker with local stories and/or some basic statistics from home. They appreciate real-life examples that put a face on an issue.
- ♥ The Ask: Stay on message! Make a clear request, asking for a commitment and then listen carefully to the response. They may need some time to consider supporting or opposing legislation, but often will share important insights into their thought process.
- ♥ Before You Leave: Get business cards from any staff you meet with and thank them. Consider taking a photo!
- ♥ After the Meeting: Briefly meet with your group outside the office to compare impressions and identify any follow-up to be done, such as sending additional information. Complete a meeting evaluation for your American Heart Association staff partner.
- ♥ At Home: Send a thank you note. It will help you form long-term relationships with your officials.