

TOP 10 MEETING TIPS

1. **Be Prepared.** Most people don't present their Member of Congress with a well-researched, well-rehearsed pitch. Those who come to town hall meetings with thoughtful arguments, good data, and persuasive stories always get remembered.

2. **Tell a Personal Story.** This is why Members of Congress hold town hall meetings – to get first-hand accounts of the impact of policies on their constituents. Think in advance of how a policy might affect you, your family, your business, or your community.

3. **Use Numbers If You Have Them.** Politicians live for one thing: 50% plus 1. This keeps them re-elected and in a job. Nearly every person to come before a Member of Congress represents more constituents either by a class or as a spokesperson. Use these numbers. "I have 50 employees," "I represent 100 people in my union," "There are 500 people in my community that think just like me."

4. **Be Respectful.** You'd be surprised how many people start a conversation with "I pay your salary so you better listen to me." It doesn't matter if you're talking to your grocer or a public official - starting any conversation with another person in a rude manner is no way to persuade them.

5. **Go in Groups.** Nothing says "listen to me" to a public official like a group of people. A chorus is better than a solo performance.

6. **Talk to Staff.** Every congressman brings staff to town hall meetings. They may seem to blend into the woodwork, but a sharp citizen seeks them out. Talk to them before the meeting, get their business card, and tell them your story (as well as asking a public question at the meeting).

7. **Leave Paper.** Town hall meetings are usually staffed by district-office staff members who do not deal with legislative issues on a daily basis. If you leave background memos or talking points, they'll likely be faxed to Washington to the legislative assistant who covers your issue.

8. **Follow-up Politely.** Politely persistent people persuade politicians. The squeaky wheel gets the grease- follow up with a phone call after attending a town hall meeting.

9. **Get People to Multiple Meetings.** This is a sure bet to get noticed. Hearing the same thing in different places signals to a politician there may be a deeper problem afoot.

10. **Demonstrate You're Not Going Away.** If you continue to show your presence at town hall meetings, the legislator must deal with you...if only to avoid an uncomfortable encounter at a future town hall meeting.

Finally, do not underestimate the power of raising a question at a public meeting and getting a public official on the record. If a Member of Congress says to a constituent in public setting, "I'll look into it," I guarantee you the issue immediately goes to the top of some staffer's to-do list. Politicians are terrified of being accused of not following through on a promise. And a Member of Congress making a pledge to a constituent at a town hall meeting is one of the biggest promises they can make.