

# Meeting With Elected Officials or Their Staff in Person\*

## When is meeting with elected officials or their staff an effective tactic?

**When you make a clear ask.** In person meetings are one way to educate elected officials on your issue and then make a clear, explicit ask to change a policy.

**When you make your issue personal.** Getting face time with elected officials gives you a chance to put a personal story and a human face to a policy ask, and shows elected officials the constituents who are behind this policy change.

Before your meeting

### **Schedule your meeting.**

Call your elected official's office to schedule your meeting.

Ask for a time that you've discussed with your group that will work for most of you, and to meet in a space big enough to fit everyone.

Some elected officials' staff will make unreasonable demands when scheduling a meeting. For example, they may ask you to take the meeting alongside citizens who have opposing views, to send a list of meeting attendees weeks in advance, or insist that you complete paperwork of some kind, etc. Don't be afraid to push back if what they're asking for doesn't work for you.

If the person you speak to says the official is unavailable, ask to meet with one of their staffers.

**Recruit more activists to join you** - post your event to [map.peoplepower.org](http://map.peoplepower.org), recruit from your own network, and confirm as many participants as possible beforehand.

**Prepare for what to expect.** The key to a good meeting is being focused and persistent – the purpose of the meeting isn't to debate policy or listen to long-winded speeches by the official you're meeting with. You want to get simple, straightforward answers to your direct ask. You deserve a straight answers from your elected officials -- they work for you! -- so prepare to ask as many times as you have to to get one.

Assign group roles and practice. If you have time, hold an organizing meeting before your scheduled meeting to assign meeting roles. -- such as a note taker, a time keeper to keep you on task, and (super important!) a main spokesperson who will make the direct ask. Role play a practice meeting by running through your agenda with your group. This will keep the meeting smooth and help you prepare for any unexpected challenges.

Arrive 20 minutes early the day of to ensure you can show up together and on time.

If you're meeting with a federal or statewide official give your local ACLU a heads up. They will be able to provide you with more context and materials that they may want you to share with the official or coordinate the visit with a meeting they already have planned.

## **During your meeting with elected officials**

**Begin by introducing the group.** If it's a small meeting, begin by having everyone introduce themselves. If it's a larger meeting give the elected official or staffer a list of everyone present and have the spokesperson introduce the group. When offering a brief personal introduction give name, neighborhood and profession -- but keep it short and relevant. Be clear that you are representing yourself as a concerned member of the community -- make sure you do not leave the impression that you are representing the ACLU. Only ACLU staff can represent the ACLU with elected officials and their staff.

**Spokesperson for the group then presents the topic** and shares their own personal story with the issue, if they have one.

**Spokesperson makes the hard ask** to ask where the official stands on the specific issue. Be polite and cordial, but persistent. Your local official may try to avoid answering, so ask as many times as you have to get a clear yes or no.

## After your meeting

**Send a follow up note** to your elected official and their staff, thanking them for their time and following up on the next steps you discussed with them, urging them again for their support of your campaign.

**Share the results of your meeting on social media** to thank them for their time, and if they supported your campaign, for their support.

**Follow up with the elected official based on the time frame they gave you.** If they did not give you a time frame, follow up and ask for one. Then follow up again.

**Plan your next tactic and event.** Continue your good work and plan your next action. Be sure to post it to the [People Power map!](#)

**Report back to People Power** by filling out this [form](#).

Please note: As a People Power activist, you don't represent the ACLU as an organization. You represent your own causes as a concerned constituent and community stakeholder. This is critical to our strength as a movement: As you work on your Freedom Cities campaign, Let People Vote campaign, and other causes, your voices will be stronger as representatives of your community. If anyone is looking for a comment about a formal ACLU position, you can refer them to [info@peoplepower.org](mailto:info@peoplepower.org) and we can contact the appropriate ACLU representative.

\* SOURCE: ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union)