



How to Meet With Your Elected Representative

Why Meet with Your Elected Representative?

- Your legislators were elected to represent you — let them know who you are and where you stand on the issues.
- Legislators want to hear from their constituents — even better in person. Office visits get their attention!
- Lobbying is not, and never should be, reserved for political professionals. You have a stake in political decisions. Get involved at the “grassroots” level.



Don't Be Intimidated!

- You don't have to be a "political junkie" to lobby.
- You persuade customers every day to hire your firm or purchase your supplies or services. You already "lobby!"
- When it comes to talking about your firm, nobody knows the subject better than you.

Meeting with your elected representative may be a little outside your comfort zone at first, but if you are like most of CLCA's members who get involved this way, it will be a satisfying experience. Better yet, it should be fun!

Meeting Goals



- To lobby your elected representative to take a specific action on a proposed law, or bill
- To form a relationship going into the future



Meet with YOUR OWN Elected Representative

- Legislators want to hear from constituents in **their own district** or from owners whose businesses employ or affect their constituents.
- Legislators typically don't mind if a constituent is accompanied by colleagues who vote outside the district. Just expect the legislator to focus on the constituent.

Make an Appointment Far in Advance

- Call the legislator's Sacramento office and ask for the scheduler. Or you can call the district office for a meeting there. During the legislative session, lawmakers commonly have office hours in their district offices on Fridays. CLCA can provide contact information.
- Be prepared to say what issue or bill number you wish to discuss.
- Let the office know if you will be accompanied by colleagues. A group of more than five is usually too many.
- Call the day before to reconfirm your appointment.



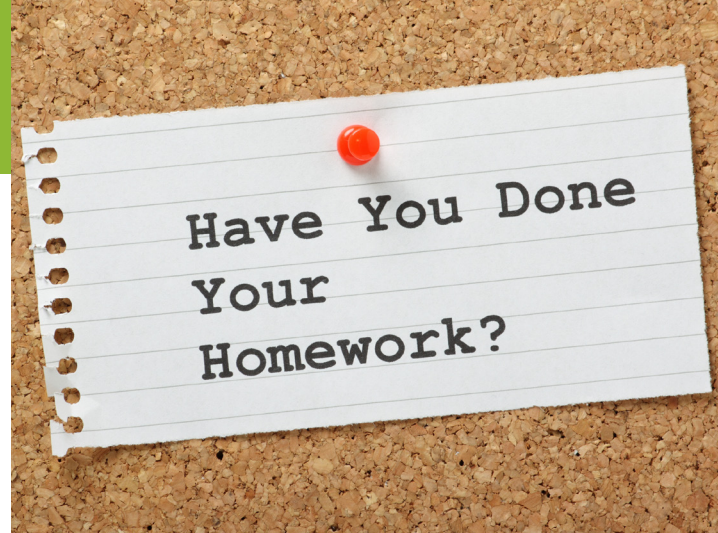
One-Bill Focus

- It's usually best to limit your meeting topic to one bill.
- The best time to discuss a proposed law, or bill, is before the legislator has to make a decision on it — a vote at a committee hearing, for example — but not so early that the measure isn't on the legislator's "radar" yet. Look to CLCA for timing guidance.



Prepare

- Study up on legislator's background and political affiliation. How does the issue relate to lawmaker's district?
- Know the issue. What are the three points you want to make about your position? Practice conveying them.
- Don't assume legislator is an expert. Anticipate tough questions and objections to your arguments.
- Know the status of the bill or bills you are bringing up, their sponsors and opponents, and other key information. CLCA staff can help you with this.





Dress Appropriately

Dress for the meeting like you are going to a professional business appointment.

Wearing appropriate clothing adds to your credibility.

Bring Something in Writing

- The most important item to give your legislator is an **issue paper** on the measure or measures you are bringing up for discussion. With sufficient notice, CLCA staff can provide you with a paper on the association's high priority legislation.
- Hand a business card to the receptionist and any staff members you meet.

Other optional items to provide might be information about your company and CLCA or facts and figures on the size and economic importance of the landscape industry (available from the association). Consider a presentation folder if you have several items.



Impress the Legislator's Staff: They're important!

Get to know your legislator's staff members. They're the "eyes and ears" of their boss, and their judgment is trusted.

Don't feel slighted if a staff member meets with you instead of your legislator. The staff member may have been assigned to meet with you because he or she is especially knowledgeable about the issue being discussed.



Kicking Off Your Meeting

- Arrive promptly, but recognize that your legislator could be running late or be interrupted during meeting.
- Introduce yourself and identify the name of your firm and its location.
- Briefly describe the nature of the business, and mention that you are a CLCA member.

Your Presentation

- Include your position, the opposing arguments, and reasons why your position is the better choice for your business as well as the legislator's other constituents.
- Give examples of how the problem at hand affects your business. Tell a personal story that makes your point, if possible.
- Express your views strongly, but be reasonable. Recognize that there are legitimate differences of opinion and political pressures.
- With respect to the opposing arguments that you address, offer constructive solutions whenever possible. Legislators are interested in reasonable compromises.
- Ask for your lawmaker's viewpoint, and listen to it carefully.

Additional Meeting Tips ...

- Stay on track. Focus on the issue. Be aware that legislator may try to throw you off track if he or she is unsympathetic to your position.
- Be very clear, and let the lawmaker know exactly what you want him or her to do.
- Honor the time constraints.



Things Not to Say or Do

- Don't philosophize or use political ideology to make your argument.
- Don't mislead. If you don't know how to answer a question, don't guess. Volunteer to follow up with an answer.
- Don't address your legislator by first name until you've earned that right.
- Don't tell legislator that you voted or didn't vote for him or her. It's not relevant.
- Don't refer to campaign contributions that you or CLCA made. That's tacky and could be illegal.

The Biggest No-No of All

- **Never** discuss issues and campaign contributions in the same meeting.
- If you'd like to make a political contribution or be invited to a future fundraiser for your legislator, make that wish known in a separate communication.
- If you believe CLCA should consider a political contribution to the legislator, fill out and submit a LandPAC Contribution Request form, available on the CLCA website.



Keep it Short

- Don't expect to spend more than 15 minutes during your visit.
- If your lawmaker signals that he or she has time to chat casually, take advantage of it and build a rapport. Just remember that you are there to thoroughly discuss the issue at hand and hopefully get a commitment for action on it.



Closing

- Don't just leave when you think the discussion has played out. Ask legislator if he or she will take some action that supports our efforts. Close the deal, like you would with a client!
- Offer to be a future resource on issues with which you have some expertise.
- Ask for a specific staff member to serve as a point of contact, and get that person's contact information.
- Consider asking legislator if he or she is interested in speaking to your CLCA chapter.



Meeting Follow Up

- Send a thank you note immediately following the meeting.
Use this opportunity to restate your issue position and assure legislator that you will be following his or her action on issue.
- Let CLCA staff know how the meeting went. This “intelligence” is valuable.
- Provide legislator’s staff with any information you promised to supply.
CLCA may be able to help you with this.



Thank you!