

# YOUTH in ACTION

## CAPITOL DAY

FEBRUARY 3, 2017

### *How to Prepare for Your Legislative Meetings*

1. Make your appointments with the legislative offices you wish to visit well in advance of the event. Schedule them for some time between 1:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. on Capitol Day. To identify your legislators, go to <http://www.fyi.legis.state.tx.us/> or call TNOYS for further assistance. Be aware that you may meet with legislative staff, rather than your actual legislators, because of their very busy schedules.
2. Consider selecting a spokesperson. This is someone who will lead the discussion and answer questions during the meeting with your legislators or legislative staff.
3. Plan to present the issue you have identified in your community and your practical solutions. This includes your proposal statement along with your recommendations (in writing, if possible).
4. Keep your presentations brief!
5. Demonstrate how your issue has affected you. Use facts and a personal story.
6. Encourage questions. It is important to answer with facts and not arguments.
7. Always be polite and respectful, even if you don't agree with the person you are talking to.
8. Leave time to write a thank you note to the legislators and staff in each of the offices you visit at the end of the day. Take a look at the Power of a Thank you document for tips!

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### *What to Do and Say During Your Legislative Meeting*

#### **Start with a firm handshake.**

Your first impression is extremely important. Try to arrive 5-10 minutes early. Introduce yourself and let the front desk know you have an appointment. A firm handshake and eye contact shows your confidence.

#### **Who are you?**

Begin by telling them who you are. Do you live in their district? Have you heard them give a speech? Establish a connection.

#### **Why are you here?**

Tell them your issues in a short-but-sweet way. Bring handouts if necessary and try to appeal to their emotions. Public officials and their staff often deal with dry individuals, so make your meeting memorable with facts, stories and first hand experiences. For example, what did it feel like when your sports program funding was cut?

#### **What can they do about it?**

Give them a list of possible solutions to your issue and try and be as specific as possible (more funding, vote a certain way on this policy item, sponsor a certain bill, etc.).

#### **Any Questions?**

Allow time for questions. If you don't know the answer, tell them you will get back with them. Don't make stuff up! Taking notes during this section is important. Thank them for their time at the end of the meeting.

#### **MORE ADVOCACY TIPS!**

- If you're going with a group, organize ahead of time and practice the meeting. Who is going to speak first? What is each person going to say?
- Be polite and creative. For example, if you are lobbying for baseball funding, try leaving a signed baseball with your contact information on it. By using a baseball as opposed to a business card, the person will easily remember that you were the group lobbying for baseball funding.