



TIPS FOR TALKING WITH YOUR LEGISLATOR

Keeping in mind that your goal is to develop an on going personal relationship with your elected representatives, as well as to influence their position on funding, specific issues or bills, here are a few things to remember when speaking to them:

- Know who your legislator is before making initial contact on an issue and find out what legislative committees he/she serves on. (Don't know? Go to www.legis.iowa.gov)
- Make the legislator care about how soil and water conservation benefits your communities and residents. Share your personal story if it helps to make your point.
- Do not be intimidated. Legislators view you as the expert on the issue.
- Do not assume that your legislator understands the issues surrounding soil and water conservation. Take the time to educate him/her. Do not use jargon.
- Know your issue. Provide facts and figures to back up your position.
- Remember all causes are good causes. You must convince your legislator that there is something extra special about yours.
- Know your opposition. Be able to address the objectionable part(s) of the opposition's stance directly and effectively, using verifiable examples and statistics.
- Put broad policy issues in a local perspective. Legislators who know how issues will impact local voters tend to grasp ideas more easily and are generally more receptive.
- Be a good listener and hear out what your legislator has to say on the issue.
- Put the legislator at ease by convincing him/her that you are there to serve as an educational resource. Act like a partner, not an adversary.
- Do not debate with a legislator or give ultimatums such as "I won't vote for you if you do not support my position". Respect the legislator's right to disagree with you.
- Do not be disappointed if your legislator sends an aide to a meeting. Aides are critical to the process.
- Spend your time working with legislators who have not made up their minds.
- Be brief, prepared, clear, honest, accurate, persuasive, timely, persistent, and grateful.
- Always follow up with a thank you note, and amplify your main points. If your legislator made a commitment to you, you should acknowledge it in the letter.
- When your legislator goes the extra mile, you may consider acknowledging his or her efforts by writing a letter to the editor in your local paper.