



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.