

# Guidelines for Having a Successful Office Visit

## Suggested Meeting Format

### Opener:

- Express thanks for taking the time to meet.
- Introduce yourself, explain purpose of the meeting, and let them know you are a constituent.
- Thank the council member for something (vote, co-sponsorship) if possible.

### Issue Presentation and Story:

- State the problem that you are addressing (either opposition to a proposed local abortion ban or support of a proactive abortion ordinance).
- State why you support this position. Include your experiences and perspective and include a personal story if possible.
- Make your ask. What do you want your council member to do? (see above)
- Wait for a response — be sure to listen!
- Offer to be a resource or send additional information if needed.

### Wrap Up:

- Review comments, commitments, and follow-up requests.
- Thank member/staff for their time; collect business cards from staff.
- Leave your business card or contact information and one-pager.

### Debrief:

- Jot down some quick notes right after the visit so you don't forget important details. Make a note of any follow up needed and plan for your follow-up.
- Send notes to [repro@acluohio.org](mailto:repro@acluohio.org).
- Send thank you notes to the council member and staff, briefly restating your issue messages and asks.

## Dos and don'ts

DO	DON'T
DO be on time and prepared. Arrive early to allow time to get through security and find the room.	DON'T argue with your council member or the staffer. Make your points politely and stay on message. If needed, agree to disagree. You never know whether one day they'll be on your side, so make sure not to burn the bridge for the future.
DO be prepared to meet with either the council member or staff. Staff-level meetings can be meaningful, as staffers are the experts who work with the member and track constituent input on issues.	DON'T allow your council member to hijack your time by focusing on issues that you did not come to discuss. Thank them politely for sharing, and then redirect the conversation back to your issue.
DO practice what you want to discuss with the lawmaker in advance. Stay on message, stick to your key points, and ask specific questions. Decide questions prior to the meeting.	DON'T make up a response if you don't know an answer. Let the person you are meeting with know you'll get back to them. Contact the ACLU of Ohio to get the information you need.
DO share personal stories with your member when it will help to convey your message and you feel comfortable doing so.	DON'T get off message. Avoid discussing unrelated personal issues – it will dilute the effectiveness of your advocacy.
DO thank whomever you meet with at the beginning of your visit and at the end.	DON'T be intimidated by your lawmakers. As a constituent, you have every right to be there, to educate on your views, and influence their position on an issue.