

Tips for Effective and Engaging Legislative Visits

Effective and engaging legislative visits are conversations- but they happen in a very limited time frame. In that time, you want to communicate your most important points/stories, make an ask of the legislator, and listen and record the person's response. Here are some tips:

Be Prepared

- Read through any materials/resources relevant to the purpose of your visit. Sometimes you will be given talking points, but the VICPP website (www.virginiainterfaithcenter.org) is also a good place to look for resources.
- Pivoting is important. If a conversation is being derailed, pivot back to the main points of your meeting.
- Prepare to make an ask. For example- will the legislator support/co-patron any of the bills you discussed? Be sure you know what bill numbers are under discussion, although sometimes they are not yet available.
- Prepare to follow up. Take notes that can be passed on to the VICPP team.

Be Principled

- Weight impacted persons' experiences with the same importance as learned expertise on the issue.
- Use people-first/asset-based language and lens. People-first language means respecting others as whole individuals, not merely defined by one experience (for example: "people who are experiencing homelessness" rather than "homeless people").
- Legislative meetings are not zero-sum games- there is no winner or loser! Affirmation and respect for all involved are key.

Be Communicative

- Step-up/ step back: If you are a person who tends to sit in the background and let others talk, step up and share why this issue is important to you. If you are a person who tends to dominate a conversation, step back and make space for others to talk.
- Prioritize story-telling over listing facts and figures (but make sure the stories are short and sweet!)
- Listen to the legislators/legislative staff but ensure speaking time is being shared equitably between constituents and staff.
- In case a meeting is cut short or needs to be rescheduled, leave behind a fact sheet and contact information to continue the conversation.

Be Proud! Take photos to share with VICPP and on social media (tag us @vainterfaith). Any photos you take during the event, please share with Roberta Oster at roberta@virginiainterfaithcenter.org