

Decision Maker Outreach and Education
Scheduling Meetings and Staying in Touch
Action Reminder: Legislators go to Session on January 5, 2009!

Staying in touch with your Montana legislators while they're in session at the Capitol is super important! If they don't hear your voice, how will they know how you feel about an issue? Each legislator represents your voice, your vote, and your passion about an issue. You have the right to let them know what's important to you! When you're doing an activity that is sponsored by reACT, you can't ask a legislator to vote a certain way on a bill, BUT you can offer them *information* about a subject in a number of ways. Passing out palm cards, fact sheets, or organizing a 'professional' activism event at or around the Capitol are just the beginning, and your legislators will use everything you offer them because you represent the future!

Meeting with them one-on-one is one of the best ways to get your voice heard, but how on earth do you pull that off? Here's the deal about setting up the spiel with your Montana legislator:

First and Foremost: What legislative district am I in???

Simple. To check out your district visit:

http://leg.mt.gov/content/committees/interim/2003_2004/dist_apport/work_plan/COUNTY_DIST.pdf

Make sure you find **both** the House and Senate districts. If this site just isn't enough, you can also make a personal visit to your local Election Office or call your County Clerk. They can help you figure out your districts.

Next, it's important to know the name of your legislator.

Who's serving in the Montana House and Senate for your area? Visit the 2009 legislative session webpage at:

<http://leg.mt.gov/css/Sessions/61st/roster.asp?HouseID=0&SessionID=94>

Using those district numbers you've just discovered:

- ⌘ Identify both your Senator and House Representative
- ⌘ Click on their names to find out each one's home address, mailing address, telephone number, and email.

While at the site, be a sleuth! Check out:

- ⌘ Any new bills introduced by your legislators for this session
- ⌘ What, if any, legislative committees they serve on.

Finally, how do you make contact?

So. You've figured out how to reach them. Excellent! Now you need to set up that **personal meeting**. Give them a call or send them an e-mail. Find out when they're available. When you ask for a meeting, be simple and direct. Here are some tips:

- ∞ Tell them your name, the group you're affiliated with, and state your district (make it clear – you live in the district they represent, and remember that you have the right to ask them for this meeting!)
- ∞ Explain that you'd like to share with them some information, including some educational resources, about an issue that's very important to you
- ∞ Ask for a personal meeting and tell them you'll bring the helpful informational materials with you.

When should you suggest meeting with your legislator(s)? A visit can take place pretty much anytime a legislator is available:

- ∞ In the legislator's hometown before the end of the year
- ∞ At the Capitol in Helena after the legislative session begins January 5, 2009
- ∞ During the session break in the legislator's home district (most legislators return home during this time).

Tips for setting up a meeting with your legislator(s) during the actual legislative session:

- ∞ Make contact with them and introduce yourself **before** the session starts! That one-on-one contact will definitely work best! Let them know who you are and what you're all about!
- ∞ If you can't meet with them before the session, that's **OK!** It's just that you'll accomplish more in your meeting if the introductions are out of the way.
- ∞ Let your legislator(s) know when you'll be in Helena.
- ∞ Be considerate! Ask your legislator(s) which time of day is most convenient for them. They are always **extremely** busy. Be willing to meet early in the morning. You can even suggest a quick meeting in the halls, before or after a committee hearing or a legislative floor session.
- ∞ A few days before your scheduled meeting, send the legislator an email reminding him or her of your appointment. Do this again the day before your meeting. Don't give them a chance to forget!

After the meeting, remember to follow up!!

Don't let them forget you **or** your messages! Send them a handwritten (not e-mail!) thank-you card and additional materials. Courtesy and persistence goes a long way!

Congratulations! You're on your way to being a real-life activist!

***These tips will help you set up a meeting with your legislator during the *Celebration on the Hill* event January 27, 2009. Now that you've got the basics of setting up the meeting, at the event in January we'll be teaching you how to present your messages, tips for speaking with legislators, and how to appeal to these important decision makers as a future Montana voter. Can't wait to see you there!