



## Townhall Meetings

### *Attending a Townhall Meeting*

One of the most effective ways to gain the attention of policymakers and their staff is to attend a townhall or community meeting. Officials arrange these meetings to hear from people in their districts and states. They generally occur during district work periods or when the legislature is out of session. You can find out the schedule for your own officials by calling their office or checking their website. Many officials send notices to any constituents on their e-mail lists as well.

What happens during a townhall meeting? Although the format varies from state to state and Member to Member, usually, the official makes some opening remarks and introduces his or her staff. There may be local leaders in attendance as well who wish to make remarks. Then, the floor is opened up to comments from the audience.

### *Checklist for Getting Involved*

- ☐ Find out when and where the meetings are. The best way to do this is to call the local legislative office and ask. You can find contact information on the policymaker's website. These events usually take place during what are known as "district work periods." The House schedule can be found [here](#) and the Senate schedule [here](#).
- ☐ Plan your message: Remember, if you decide to speak, you'll have two audiences at this kind of event. The first is the policymaker and his/her staff. The second is the public-at-large. As you think about what you want to say and/or the questions you want to ask, bear in mind that your friends and neighbors are listening.
- ☐ Create a thirty second "elevator speech" with a question at the end: Your role at this meeting is to get policymakers and staff to think about your issue, and you do this by a) telling your story and b) asking a question. Following is a three to four-sentence formula you can use to capture their attention (positively, of course).
  - Hello, my name is [\_\_\_\_\_] and I'd like to ask about [\_\_\_\_\_(issue)\_\_\_\_\_].
  - As a golf course Superintendent, this impacts me because [\_\_\_\_\_].
  - For example, I had to [\_\_\_\_\_(provide personal example)\_\_\_\_\_].
  - Do you have any thoughts on this issue and have you considered ways to address this concern? (Note: this is a nicer way of saying "what are you doing about that?" Being polite will get you much further than the alternative).

- If you're talking to someone who has already expressed opposition to your views, change that fourth sentence to:

- I understand you've taken a different position on this issue. Can you please tell me why?

- Arrive a few minutes early or stay a few minutes late: This is a great way to spend a few minutes either talking with the legislator him or herself, or meeting their all-important local staff. If you've made a policy ask before, you can follow-up on it here. Many policymakers are so impressed you asked again that, especially for relatively non-controversial issues, they'll agree on the spot!