



HOW TO SPEAK TO PUBLIC OFFICIALS

Elected officials work for you, and their staff count every constituent contact.

You don't need to be a policy expert; you need to be a real person from their district with a clear story and a specific ask. This guide covers the three settings you're most likely to face: a one-on-one meeting, a committee hearing, and a day of action.

ONE-ON-ONE AND SMALL-GROUP MEETINGS

Request the meeting in writing through the office's website or scheduler, naming the topic and noting you're a constituent. You'll often be offered a staffer instead of the member. Take it happily; staffers write the briefing memos, and a good staff meeting is a win.

Assign roles before you walk in. If you're going as a group, pick a lead speaker, someone to open with a genuine thank-you for something the official has done, one or two storytellers, someone to make the ask, and a notetaker. Practice once out loud.

Open with thanks and confirm the time. “Thank you for meeting with us; I know we have fifteen minutes.

Have one specific ask. “Will you support mandatory safety testing for the most powerful AI systems?” or “Will you back stronger controls on advanced chip exports?” An ask they can say yes or no to is the most strategic use of your time. Get their answer, whatever it is, and write it down.

Stories beat statistics. Tell a personalized story about how AI is affecting you, the people you know and others in the members' district. This will be more effective than statistics or talking points from a lobbyist.

Don't bluff. If you're asked something you don't know: “Great question, I'll follow up with that.” Then actually follow up; it's your excuse to email them again.

Leave a one-pager (the Alliance can provide one) and send a thank-you email within 48 hours restating the ask and delivering anything you promised.



COMMITTEE HEARINGS AND PUBLIC TESTIMONY



Learn the rules first: Every legislature handles sign-ups, time limits, and written testimony differently. Check the committee's page, and arrive early enough to register and clear security.



Prepare both versions: oral testimony you can deliver in two minutes even if the limit is three, and a written version (about a page) submitted to the committee, which gets read by members who weren't in the room.



Structure of talk: thank the chair; state your name, town, and whether you are a constituent of anyone on the committee (be sure to mention it if you are, as it matters); state your position on the bill by number; share your story; make your ask; and thank the committee.



Personal and plain. Committees hear hours of expert testimony. What sticks is the parent, the teacher, the small-business owner speaking without jargon. Save statistics for written testimony.



Don't repeat what's already been said. "I echo the earlier testimony in support, and I'd add one thing" respects the committee's time and makes your point stand out.



Don't bluff. Answer what you know, offer to follow up on what you don't, and never argue with a committee member.

DAYS OF ACTION

Show up trained. Attend the prep session, know the day's specific asks, and stick to them. A unified message across thirty meetings is the entire point of the day.

Teams and roles: you'll usually be grouped with other advocates for a schedule of short meetings. Sort out roles for each meeting in the hallway beforehand, and make sure the constituent in the room is the one telling their story.

Be the most courteous people in the building. Wear branded materials, hold doors, thank every receptionist. Capitol staff talk to each other, and your conduct will carry weight.

Log every meeting the same day: who you met, what they said, what they committed to, what needs follow-up; then send it to coalitions@secureainow.org.

Thank-yous within 48 hours, from the constituent in each meeting.

IF YOU CAN'T GET A MEETING

- Attend the official's public events and town halls, and ask your question there, politely and on the record. Bring a friend to capture the exchange on video; documenting a public event is your right, and a respectful clip of the question and answer is valuable.
- Ask the scheduler about district office hours or mobile office events, which many members hold even when they decline meetings.
- If your member holds no town halls at all, ask why in writing and request one. The ask itself gets logged with your member.

AFTER THE EVENT

You're there to **build a relationship** rather than to win an argument.

Officials remember the advocates who were prepared, honest, brief, and pleasant, and those are the advocates whose calls get returned when it's time for an important vote.



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