

Tips on Meeting with your Elected Officials

Whether you are just dropping by or you have a scheduled meeting, taking the time to tell your elected representative that you are available as a resource, and you are knowledgeable on the issues facing the profession is a great way to develop a relationship with them and work to influence the positions they take on issues important to you and GSCPA.

Prepare for Your Meeting

- Read through the talking points and the leave behind provided by GSCPA. We have information to help, as well as materials that you can leave with your elected official and his staff.
- Decide who will attend the meeting. Bringing more than four or five people can be hard to manage.
- Plan out your meeting. People can get nervous in a meeting, and time is limited. Be sure that you lay out the meeting beforehand, including who will start the conversation.
- Decide what you want achieve. What is it you want your elected official to do -- vote for or against the bill? Make a commitment to introduce or co-sponsor legislation? Asking your legislator or his or her staff member to do something specific will help you know how successful your visit has been!

During the Visit

- Before you enter the office, gather outside the entrance with your group and take a picture. This will provide a powerful visual for your action and help GSCPA create a story that can be shared. Feel free to take pictures once you enter the office as well, if the staff will allow it.
- Be prompt and patient. Elected officials run on very tight schedules. Be sure to show up on time for your appointment, and be patient -- it is not uncommon for legislators to be late or to have your meeting interrupted by other business.
- Make introductions and be clear who is a constituent in the meeting. Make sure to also identify yourself as a GSCPA member. Describe GSCPA.
- Stick to your talking points! Personalize your comments and provide local context. Personal stories and local examples help illustrate why your issue is important.
- Keep it short and focused! You will have 20 minutes or less with a staff person, and as little as 10 minutes if you meet with your elected official. Make the most of that brief time by sticking to your topic.

After the Meeting

- Right after the meeting, compare notes with everyone in your group to understand what the elected official committed to do and what follow up information you committed to send.
- Each person who took part in the meeting should promptly send a personal thank you letter to your elected official. Remind the elected official of anything he or she may have agreed to do.
- Follow up in a timely fashion with any requested materials and information.
- Let GSCPA know what you learned during your meeting by sending an email to Don Cook at dcook@gscpa.org.

Just Dropping By?

Don't have time to set up a formal meeting? Not a problem! You can also plan a drop-by visit to your elected officials. Follow these tips to make the most of a shorter visit:

- Upon entering the office, identify yourself to the receptionist as a GSCPA member and a constituent, and present your business card and GSCPA leave behind.
- Be sure to leave a copy of your materials with the person you speak to. If there is no staff person available, leave a personal note, your business card, and the materials you brought. Also, feel free to chat about the issue with the person who is sitting at the reception desk — you never know whom you're talking to!
- As always, remember to share the results of your drop-by visit with GSCPA by emailing Don Cook at dcook@gscpa.org.

Good luck and have fun!