

Legislative Visits  
January 2023

*Highlights and pointers for a successful legislative visit*

Our colleges and students are universally respected by legislators, so congratulations on maintaining that perception...and let's keep that standard consistent with a few tips for your meetings today.

- People who are elected truly go in wanting to do the best they can for their district and the state.
- Don't knock on office doors, just walk in.
- For group visits, please stay on message and remain unified.

**Quick facts:**

- Each Assembly member represents about 57,000 people.
- Each Senator represents about 172,000 people. (Their whole district includes the 3 Assembly districts within their Senate District.)
- They represent thousands of people who may not vote, who may not care, who care a lot, who always vote. The legislature does their best to serve them all.
- Senators and Representatives have the same salary each 2-year session. This year it's \$57,408
- People working in that building come from a variety of backgrounds and experiences.
- *Staff are extensions of the legislator* and work very closely with them and for them on the issues. Staffers both take direction and take initiative. It is in your best interest to have a good relationship with staff and treat them with respect. Sidebar, some staffers will become elected officials in the future. You are always cultivating this field of connection for future benefit.

**Nuts and bolts.**

- If you don't know how to pronounce the legislator's name, please ask. BUT you don't even have to know that. 'Senator' and 'Representative' are just fine. Or ask Layla.
- Big insider tip: Just walk in, don't knock. If you are early, send one person in to see if you can go in now. Offices are small, so you may need to wait a bit in the hall.

- Intro: Your name, position pres/board/staff, general work info esp if you work or employee people in this legislator's district.
- Be direct and brief. Stay on track: it's to your benefit
- ASK for support for the budget and tell what this means to our college/district/students.
- Offer your business cards and feel free to make a note on the back with phone/topics or whatever.
- Thank them for the time and extend an offer to supply feedback on legislation or be a sounding board on state issues. Invite them to your campus!

Within the basics, here are some important tips:

- *New legislator observation:* When meeting with new legislators, understand they may talk more than veteran legislators do. They are fresh from campaign where they were expected to monologue more. When you are with a new legislator, what's most important is your relationship building. You can always get back to them with your budget request.
- Very important: Don't hijack a meeting when you are part of a group. If you have extended stories, personal issues, opinions on how the state budget works or doesn't work, etc., please call your legislator and discuss these on your own time. Today, you are speaking on behalf of your students, board and college.
- Enthusiastically engage with staffers if you don't see the legislator on this visit. They are interested and learning as well, and they are an extension of the legislator. It's just as important they get your stories and viewpoint.
- I recommend not interrupting the legislator. Sometimes things get off track. Remember the connection you make is most important. That said, if you can gracefully do it, return the conversation to today's business, the budget.

- When you leave the office with a handout, make sure they have a phone number to call if they have follow-up and questions.
- **Designate someone in your group to take a group photo at the start or end of your visit. If the staffer is available, maybe they can take the picture. Be sure to email a good one to the legislator so they can include it in their e-update! Bonus points if you list names of who is in the picture and your college's name. Make it easy for them.**
- If there is a problem, poor visit, or any difficulty with an office I recommend letting Layla know so she is aware. This is just FYI, not a judgement or punitive sort of thing. Any information that helps Layla and System do their job on behalf of our students and colleges is helpful.
- One more thing I'd ask you to keep in mind. Please don't assume everything comes down to partisanship. Legislators weigh a lot of needs and requests every day and everywhere they are. No one forces legislators to vote or draft a bill in a way the legislator doesn't want. These people live in their districts and see their constituents at the store, at school, at events for their kids. Try and respect their view even if you don't agree with it. They do their best to respect yours.
- Remember:
  - The good relationship and your stories are top priority.
  - Don't knock, just walk in.
  - Don't hijack a meeting. Respect the group and your message.

### Wrap up:

A big part of the reason our Technical College System and the District Boards Association are respected and trusted is that you've earned this over decades of integrity in communication and numerous decisions to focus on the common good.

Very few organizations enjoy that level of support and trust from the legislature.

Your unified voices, respectful and informed communication, and clear messaging reap benefits for all. WTCS has a brand of trust and legislators universally like you. Keep that team spirit in all you do and say.