



Tips for Speaking with Lawmakers

Find Your Niche

There are multiple ways to be an advocate. But first, you'll need to find out who your lawmakers are. Know the difference between a state legislator and a federal representative. That way you will know whether your issue is a local issue or federal one. You'll then figure out what key issues you are passionate about and want to advocate for, and discover which platforms works best for you and your voice. One of the most impactful ways to make your voice heard is by connecting with local advocacy groups. Most groups have specific calls to action and can set up appointments with lawmakers that you can be part of. You can find these groups by searching through Google, Facebook, LinkedIn, volunteer boards, and local organizations you frequent. Your voice will be amplified when working with a community.

Ways You Can Contact Your Lawmaker

Social Media: Can be quick and easy to get your point across especially on Twitter. The downside is that social media doesn't give lawmakers enough information about their constituents. They'll want to know more about where constituents are from, and the messages or tweets aren't easy to track.

Email: Using lawmakers online forms on their website is best for electronic communications. The forms keep record of your contact information and sorts the messages by topics. Personal stories are what gets lawmakers attention. And you can request a response from them as well.

Personal Letters: Although personal stories are very important, after 9/11, D.C. offices have a new process of handling letters and could take weeks to reach your lawmaker. For local representatives their letters are received in a few days. Personal letters are similar to emails and need your personal story. Be sure to also include your contact information if you would like a response.

Phone Calls: These are the fastest and one of the easiest ways to contact your lawmaker. When there are specific calls to action, your lawmakers should have an immediate response.

Town Halls: Not every lawmaker can meet one-on-one with their constituents. Town Halls open up the floor for people to ask questions. You can find information of town halls through your law makers email or mailing list, social media, or by calling their office. If you come with questions, make them brief. If your coming with an advocacy group, they should have a list of questions ready.

In-Person Meetings: Most often you can meet with lawmakers through your advocacy group in 15-30 minute time slots. Here you'll have a chance to share your story and the piece of legislation you're passionate about. This is an opportunity for dialogue.

F.A.B. Model of How to Talk to Your Lawmaker

Friend - Connect

Hi, my name is (name), and I'm a constituent from (where you live). I would like to talk about Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD). FASD happens from prenatal alcohol exposure and is often misunderstood. FASD impacts many lives and I appreciate the opportunity to share my story. (Share why you are involved, and who you know that is impacted.)

Activist - Motivate and Generate Urgency

(Use this opportunity to talk about piece/s of legislation that you are advocating for or against and why it is important to you. How does this impact your life, your loved ones, your community?)

Banker - Clear, Confident, and Specific

Will you show your support for the FASD community by voting (insert bill number, area of interest, policy proposed)? I appreciate your advocacy on behalf of the FASD community. I'd ask you to think of my family and me while you place your vote. I appreciate you taking the time to meet with us today, and if I can be a resource to you, please feel free to reach out. You can contact me at (insert phone, email address, mailing address, etc. if you would like a response).

Frequently Asked Questions

I disagree with my lawmaker, will my opinion matter?

Yes, your voice matters! The more people you have in your corner the better odds of swaying your lawmaker.

I agree with my lawmaker, should I still reach out?

Yes, your lawmaker appreciates hearing from constituents who agree with them and they appreciate your thanks and support.

I have a disability and can't communicate with my lawmaker in the ways listed, what do I do?

Whichever method of communication works best for you please know that your voice will still be heard. If you have access to someone who can help you write an email, or call and read a message to your lawmaker, your message will get through.

I don't have access to the internet how do I find out who represents me?

Call the toll free number, 1-844-USA(872)-0234 and be immediately connected to your lawmaker.