



MEETING WITH YOUR LEGISLATOR

Arranging the Appointment

- **Coordinate.** Try to coordinate your appointment with other working women advocates from your state. By working together, you will have a better chance of covering more offices and meeting with the actual legislator.
- **Locating your legislator's telephone number and address.** You can access www.capitol.state.tx.us to look up our Legislator's phone number and email.
- **Call first and ask for the scheduler.** Keep in mind that each congressional office schedules appointments differently, but usually they are arranged by the legislator's scheduler or appointment secretary.
- **When you speak to the scheduler, introduce yourself and explain that you are a constituent.** Tell the scheduler the date and time you would like to meet with your legislator (be flexible) and the general topics you wish to discuss. If there is more than one person attending the meeting, let the scheduler know the number of attendees. Also, if someone in your group knows the legislator, personally or professionally, make sure that the scheduler is aware of the relationship.
- **Follow up with a written request.** Draft a scheduling request letter asking to meet with your legislator and/or legislative assistant. We recommend that you begin to schedule appointments as soon as possible. In the letter, mention that you wish to discuss issues related to equity for workingwomen and families such as equal pay and paid sick leave. Fax the request to the attention of the scheduler.
- **Expect the meeting to be scheduled for 15-20 minutes.** However, it often turns out that if the meeting is going well, you may get more time with our legislator than you expected.
- **Do not be surprised if you meet with your legislator's staff person.** Legislative staffers are very important in the legislative process. They are responsible for gauging constituent's views on issues and communicating them to your legislator. Legislative staffers handle all the detail work on issues and therefore, legislators rely heavily on their knowledge and expertise.
- **Follow-up.** Call the week before and then the day before to confirm the appointment as legislator's schedules are always changing.
- **Allow ample time between appointments to walk to your next scheduled visit.** Leave 30 minutes between meetings and 45 minutes to get from the Senate to the House side.

Before the Meeting

- **Do your homework.** Know what issues are important to your legislator, what committee they sit on and try to find out their current position on the issue that you are going to discuss. (View voting record on www.capitol.state.tx.us)

- **Tell a Story.** Tell the legislator how you are personally impacted by these policies and why you are involved. Tell them how equal pay impacts the women in their district. If there is a military base in their district talk about women veterans issues.
- **Organize your group.** Decide who will discuss what and in what order the participants will speak. Be certain everyone agrees on the central message and what will be asked of the legislator. This way you will avoid a possible internal debate in front of your legislator.
- **Bring information to leave with your legislator.** TBW will supply you with leave behind packets. Supplement this packet with information on you. Make sure you attach your business card to the packet.

During the Meeting

- **Be on time and be patient.** Respect your legislator's busy and forever changing schedule by arriving at the office promptly and accommodating interruptions.
- **Say thank you.** Always begin your meeting by thanking your legislator for taking the time to visit with you. If your legislator has been supportive of your cause, you should thank them for their support as well.
- **Explain to your legislator who you represent and why you asked for the meeting.** If you are in a group, you should individually introduce yourself and briefly describe your organization.
- **Be Brief.** Get to the point quickly by being brief and direct. When presenting the issue, do not assume your legislator has any prior knowledge of the subject. Stress how each issue affects the community. Your presentation should convey the overall message that if you "win," so does your legislator and the community.
- **Don't make stuff up.** If you do not know the answer to a question, say so, and promise to get back to your legislator with the answer. Be sure to follow up on your promise as quickly as possible.
- **Make sure you do not do all of the talking.** Give your legislator an opportunity to ask questions and respond to your concerns. More often than not, constituents leave a meeting not knowing their legislator's position.
- **Ask for a commitment.** Do not be timid. Ask your legislator exactly where they stand on an issue or an aspect of a bill. You have a right to know.

Follow Up After the Meeting

- **Send a thank you letter to your legislator.** Thank your legislator for taking the time to meet with you, and then briefly summarize the main points of the meeting.
- **File a legislative visit report and email it to info@texasbusinesswomen.org**