

# PARK ADVOCACY DAY

## OUR PARKS OUR FUTURE

### Tips for Meeting with Legislators and Staff on Park Advocacy Day

#### At the Meeting

- **Be on time.** Identify yourself as a participant in Park Advocacy Day and the organization you represent. If you are a registered voter in the legislator's district, be sure to say so. Remind them that you are there as part of Park Advocacy Day. Begin on a friendly note by introducing yourselves and explaining the purpose of your meeting.
- **Present a clear message.** Do not go off on a tangent or become overly technical. The California State Parks Foundation (CSPF) will be providing talking points – stick to those issues. Be succinct. This may be the most important issue in the world to you, but it is only one of several dozen on your legislator's plate.
- **Choose one person to speak for your group** to begin the discussion. Get your point across in the fewest possible words. Say exactly what you want the legislator to do--using your own words or the language prepared by CSPF. If your issue involves legislation, cite the specific bill's name or number.
- **Be prepared for questions**, even challenges. If a question throws you off balance because you don't know the answer, don't be afraid to admit it. Say you will research the matter and report back to them. Feel free to contact CSPF to ask for help in answering question.
- **Be a good listener.** Give the legislator or staff member a chance to express his or her point of view.
- **Give special recognition to legislators who are known to be on your side.** Ask them for advice and help in reaching other legislators and suggestions for ways to communicate the issue to their colleagues.
- **Make notes after the meeting.** Unless you are asked to perform a specific action (such as sending some information to the legislator after the meeting), don't worry about taking elaborate notes during the meeting. This could distract you and your group from making your most persuasive points. Be sure to make note of any specific action items or requests from the legislator during the meeting, but save the meeting summary for after the meeting is over. Once your meeting is completed, jot down who you met with, their titles (from their business cards), what you talked about, etc.
- **Leave on a friendly note.** Even if a legislator or staff member expresses opposition to your viewpoint, thank them for their time and look for an opportunity to continue the friendly discussion and have access to them in the future. Offer to send further information, and never back him or her into an argument – this will only cause the legislator or staff person to become defensive and stop listening.

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- **Be discreet in the Capitol halls and elevators.** Never talk about legislators, staff members, political parties, or other individuals involved with your issue when you are in hallways or elevators before or after meetings. It's difficult to tell who may be overhearing your conversation and could misinterpret something you or your colleagues say. Wait to "debrief" about the meeting once you leave the Capitol.
- **Be sure to leave the information sheet** provided to you by CSPF. This leave-behind will remind the legislator/staff person of your key points and will ensure that all the important issues are covered.

### Follow Up

- **Inform CSPF staff of issues or concerns that require significant follow up.** If you encounter a legislator or staff person who wants answers to questions you're unable to answer, or who would like more specific information than was provided during Park Advocacy Day, contact CSPF staff to alert them to the need for follow up. Responding to legislators' requests promptly and thoroughly will leave them with a positive impression of the parks movement and Park Advocacy Day, which will help in making them an advocate for parks!