



EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY: DO'S AND DON'TS

It can be hard to know how to approach your elected officials. We've put together a list of do's and don'ts to consider as you engage in the public process.

DO

- Address your Legislator properly. Members of the Senate are addressed as "Senator" (as in "Senator McGuire"). Members of the Assembly are addressed as "Assemblyman", "Assemblywoman," or "Assemblymember" as appropriate (as in "Assemblyman Gallagher", "Assemblywoman Carrillo", or "Assemblymember McCarty). Make sure to get the pronunciation right.
- Introduce yourself immediately at each contact. Public officials meet too many people to remember everyone.
- If you reside in the legislator's district, make sure you say so. Legislators are particularly interested in hearing from those who they represent (and who can vote for them).
- Refer to a bill by number whenever possible.
- Use your own words, tell your own story, speak with passion.
- Be brief and explicit, courteous, and reasonable.
- Make things personal. Establish your own credentials or expertise on the subject of legislation under consideration. You can do this by stating what organization you belong to, what park(s) you regularly visit, how long you have used the park, and what support activities you have engaged in on behalf of that park.
- Treat legislative staff courteously. Their cooperation can make or break your chances to reach the legislators themselves, and in many cases are part of decision-making related to policies put before the legislator
- Assume everything is on the record. Always keep off-the-record comments confidential.
- Keep the door open for further discussion in spite of any apparently negative attitudes.

DON'T

- Don't begin, "As a citizen and tax payer" (your elected representative assumes you are a citizen , and they knows we all pay taxes and vote).
- Don't apologize for taking his or her time. If you are brief and to the point they will be glad to hear from you.
- Don't be arrogant, condescending, or threatening toward legislators or their staff.
- Don't argue or back legislators into a corner where they take a definite position against you.
- Be present – don't take too many notes of during your conversation while talking to a legislator.