

IASP Advocacy Guide for Members

Methods of Communication:

1. In Person Meetings

- a. Invite legislators to your school
 - i. Open house events, concerts, science fairs, STEM activities
 - ii. 'Principal for the Day.' This doesn't have to be a Federal or State rep. Think about local (Mayor, town council, city council, elected official).
 - iii. Any event that they can publicize!
- b. Invite legislators to attend local principal meetings or IASP District meetings.
- c. Attend Legislators events in your district
 - i. Town hall meetings
 - ii. Legislative breakfasts/luncheons
 - iii. Office hours in district
- d. Schedule meeting with legislator in your district
 - i. Coffee?
 - ii. Meet at public event
 - iii. Walk and talk
- e. Schedule meeting at Statehouse
 - i. Time with your travel downtown
 - ii. Easier during session
 - iii. Out of session takes more planning but is possible.
- f. When meeting in person, take pictures. Make sure to post them on social media and tag the legislator. This is great PR for them and they will appreciate it!

2. Phone calls

- a. Don't expect to speak with your legislator directly.
- b. Ask to speak with the Legislative Assistant (LA).
- c. Explain why you are calling (issue at hand).
- d. Ask for the legislator's position (LA may or may not be able to answer).
- e. Be courteous and thank the LA for their time.

3. Email

- a. Make sure to include your address and telephone number. You want them to know you are their constituent.
- b. Proofread!

- c. Try to only discuss ONE issue. If you have other issues to discuss, send separate emails. Make sure to reference the bill by number (HB 1002, SB 345, etc.)
 - d. Invite the legislator to contact you to discuss your position on the bill.
 - e. Understand, again, that you may be corresponding with LA.
4. Social Media
- a. If you use social media, follow legislator accounts: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram.
 - b. In this day and age, most legislators have accounts and are active on them.
 - c. If they post something you agree with, LIKE it. They will get alerts and this can build goodwill.
 - d. You can learn how they feel about issues and may be able to use their posts in conversation with them.
 - e. Avoid the temptation to be critical on social media. This can be a roadblock for you in developing a positive relationship with the legislator.

Tips for Effective Communication (Regardless of format):

1. Be polite and respectful. Refer to them as “Representative” or “Senator.” **This is a relationship building process!!!**
2. Introduce yourself and your position.
3. Show gratitude. Thank them for your service. Thank them for listening. Thank them for taking time to communicate with you.
4. Be persistent. You may not always get a response. Sessions can be busy and even the best intentioned legislator will have things slip through the cracks. Keep up your communicative efforts. If one method isn’t successful, try another!
5. Prepare ahead of time. Create bullet points. You will want to be concise in your messaging (again, regardless of the format for communication).
6. Try to include local, specific examples of how the legislation being discussed will affect your students, school, community, etc.
7. Be prepared to educate your legislator. They each serve on several committees and deal with legislation of all varieties. They may not have a good background on the issue. Don’t be put off by this, educate them!
8. Always thank them for the time they spent with you! **This is a relationship building process!**

Things to Avoid:

1. Don't be rude or disrespectful. They will dismiss you and not listen to your message.
2. Don't provide false information. Refrain from exaggerating.
3. Don't attack their political affiliation.
4. Avoid speaking (or sending an email) in the 'heat of the moment' if you're upset about something. Wait 24 hours and craft a better message.
5. Remember, **This is a relationship building process!**

Miscellaneous Tips:

1. Register and Vote!
2. Stay abreast of education related legislation. Follow Schoolhouse News and podcast updates. Read newspaper articles, Chalkbeat, etc.
3. Watch Education Committee hearings on webcast (www.iga.in.gov)
4. Work to build a relationship with the legislative assistants.
5. Don't just be critical...try to offer a solution or at least offer to be a part of the conversation to help find a solution.
6. Be brief and concise! Honor the legislator's time.
7. Always remember, your VOICE matters!