

Virtual Meeting & Lobbying Guide

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we do business. In-person meetings and events have been moved to virtual. While a face-to-face contact is the most effective, it may not always be possible. Virtual meetings have become an important meeting tool. A virtual meeting can detect a lawmaker's body language and facial expressions. This information may be as important as what they say. Please note that video conferencing requires more planning and testing than using a conference call line, so please make sure you and your advocates are prepared.

- **Video Conference Platform.** Two, easy to use, video conferencing services below.
 - **Zoom-** zoom.us
 - **GoToMeeting-** gotomeeting.com
- **Legislator Contact Information.** The state's legislative website provides statehouse, business and home contact information for legislators. The House and Senate both have a roster of each member available under the Roster tab. When they are in Topeka, it is best to use their Statehouse contact information. When in their districts, it is best to use their campaign or personal contact information. www.kslegisature.org.
- **Meeting Invite.** Reach out to staff or the lawmaker directly to schedule a conference call or video conference chat. Once a time is agreed upon, send the lawmaker and staff the video chat link or conference call information.
- **Test your tech.** Make sure your technology works. Test your platform with a friendly coworker to ensure that there are no issues before your meeting. Assign someone to help manage the technology, so if issues arise someone is available to assist. This will limit distractions for the lawmaker participating in the meeting.
- **Talking Points.** Familiarize yourself with the talking points before the meeting. If you have questions be sure to get them answered before you host lawmaker's meeting.
- **Have a Meeting Plan.** Keep the meeting short. If more than one advocate is on the call designate a meeting Leader. Divide up talking points amongst participants. Be sure to thank the lawmaker. Make sure everyone on the call introduces themselves. Explain the reason for the meeting. Discuss your connection to the tourism industry. Discuss how tourism affects your local community.
- **Questions.** Allow time for the lawmaker to ask questions and request any additional information they might need. If you do not know the answer be sure to make note of the questions and follow up quickly with the answer.
- **Asks.** Be sure to ask for the lawmaker's support of the specific issue. Ask if the legislator will support our bill and/or assist with advancing the issue in the Legislature. If the lawmaker resist do not be rude or argumentative. Ask if there is additional information you can provide.
- **Follow Up.** Be sure to follow up with a thank you. Written communications are another effective tool and a follow-up email or thank you note will reinforce your personal discussion. It also allows you another opportunity to reinforce your Asks.
- **Show your Appreciation.** When your legislator assists our tourism efforts, be sure to thank them and tell others about it. Consider writing an editorial to praise their efforts. Do not take their actions for granted and let them know you are appreciative of their efforts.

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL MEETING

- **Practice ahead of time!** Write down your top two or three points on an index card. Practice out loud if you are nervous. You don't need to commit anything to memory, but it's a good idea to make sure you feel comfortable sharing your message.
- **Do your homework on the elected official.** Look for common interests or connections. Legislators are most influenced by the opinions of constituents. The most effective legislative communications come from constituents whom the legislator knows personally and to whom legislators are locally accountable. Some of the most effective lobbying is done at or from back home.
- **Remember that lawmakers are people, too.** Connect with your lawmaker as a person. Start your conversation by thanking them for meeting with you. Ask how their Session is going for them. When you are welcoming and friendly, you create the foundation for a productive conversation.
- **Stick to your message.** Stay focused on the legislative asks. If the conversation veers in a different direction re-direct the conversation back to tourism. As an example, you can say, "Yes, I agree this issue is important but I do need to talk to you about the impact the tourism industry is having in Kansas." A simple, direct pivot is often the best way to get back to your point. Thoughtful and persuasive contacts often change a legislator's mind and bring about a review of his or her positions.
- **It's okay if you don't know the answer.** You don't have to be an expert, and your lawmaker won't expect you to know everything. If you're not sure about something, just say so. Write their question down and tell them you will get back to them with the answer. Be sure to follow-up with the answer once you've obtained it.
- **Legislators are often caught between conflicting interests and opinions.** Sometimes, their votes may be contrary to your asks. Present your position logically and base it on facts. Try to understand their obstacles, outlook and objectives. If your lawmaker isn't supportive, keep calm. It can be frustrating if your legislator isn't receptive. It is ok to agree to disagree. Keep your cool, and try getting your point across another way. Review talking points, including the industry's common responses. When possible, relate the issue back to the lawmaker's district. Lawmakers will take notice when an issue relates directly to their own constituents.
- **Do not be argumentative.** Make your point, but do not engage in a quarrelsome debate. Your objective is to convince your legislator of the correctness of your views and not the stupidity of his or her opinions.
- **Never threaten your legislator** if he or she refuses to see an issue your way. Few respond positively to such statements and they effectively preclude positive relations with that legislator in the future.
- **Communications must be timely.** Inform your legislator of your views while there is time to take action. Contacts with legislators before a committee vote or before floor action by the committee of the whole, in both chambers of the legislature, are most effective.