



Legislative Advocacy Basics - Meeting Your Legislator

This educational document is intended to supplement the information posted on the PCIC Legislative Advocacy webpage found as a link on our [InformedConsentPA.org](https://www.informedconsentpa.org) website.

Identifying Your Legislators

Go to <https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/home/findyourlegislator/#address> Enter your address and click "Search". For PA state legislative activities, you'll want to note your PA House and PA Senate representatives. Also note the districts they represent. Click on the names of your representatives to find brief biographies, committee assignments and contact information. Select a "Stay Connected" option to sign up for newsletters via their individual websites and to follow your state representative on social medias.

NOTE: These are different than your federal legislators.

Schedule your meeting – preferably get 2-4 others to go with you. They can be members of your [local PCIC chapter group](#), or friends/relatives.

Call their district office to schedule.

Think of your initial meeting as a fact-finding and "getting to know you" mission. It's all about BUILDING RAPPORT.

1. Research your legislator – check their biography, see what committees they're on, recent social media feed, sign up for their newsletter. Learn what committees they are on and what issues they are working on.
2. Choose and print the handout that you want to leave with the legislator. Keep it simple; most legislators know VERY LITTLE about vaccine issues other than what they have heard from the media and health department. Expect to start with the basics if you have not met with them before.

There are 3 main things that we want every legislator to know:

- a. Vaccine manufacturers are not liable for harm caused by their products since Congress passed the NCVIA in 1986.
- b. The vaccine schedule has tripled since the passing of that law.
- c. Even though most cases are rejected because of the cumbersome and costly court procedures, the Federal program has paid out over \$4 Billion to victims of vaccine injury.

We recommend the [Basic Vax Facts](#) document along with the [Current CDC Schedule](#) as tools for conveying these points. **Whatever literature you bring, make absolutely sure that it is from a credible source.** Keep your handout in a folder or similar to keep it in good condition.

3. Bring something to write on. Bringing a notebook makes you appear genuinely interested – interested enough to take notes. (If you forget this, you can take notes on your phone, or ask the receptionist for something to write on.)



4. Dress well. “When in Rome” – people build rapport more quickly with people who appear to be like them. Try to wear clothes that help you feel confident. Coming straight from work is okay, too! If you have to show up in scrubs, a uniform, or work boots, that is fine. Legislators listen to people who work in PA!

5. Plan to arrive early.

6. Park and rest in your car for a few minutes to gather your thoughts, materials, and check in with your state of mind. We recommend trying some breathing techniques to relax. Your demeanor should be calm, cheerful, and curious - three Cs.

7. Meet with your friends outside if possible and go in together.

8. Your local legislator’s office is in your neighborhood and is typically much easier to navigate than meeting at the Capitol. You may find yourself waiting with constituents who are also your neighbors and staff members working in the lobby area. In this case it’s good to have a two-minute “elevator speech” prepared for those you meet. Feel confident as you introduce yourself to the staff as you check in and be aware any interactions may be shared with the legislator you are meeting with. When introducing yourself to the legislator be sure to thank them in advance for sharing their time with you.

9. If possible and appropriate, ask a question about something they are already working on or have done – a bill they introduced, community project they are involved in, or something from their bio. Try to create common ground.

10. Introduce your information “Did you know that...”

11. Building Rapid Rapport –

- a. Repeat the last few words of their statement or important point
- b. Encourage them to talk
- c. Take notes
- d. NEVER interrupt – try to truly listen without just waiting for the pause so that you can get your points across (taking notes can help with this).

12. Ask WHAT and HOW, NOT WHY – Why questions tend to make people defensive. Ask what and how questions.

- a. What do you think would happen if....
- b. What made you think that
- c. How do you think we could...
- d. How do you think that parents could find a doctor....



13. PCIC is not a partisan group and does not take a stance on other topics beyond medical freedom which includes informed consent, privacy, and choice for medical procedures in Pennsylvania. Try to keep the focus on informed consent for vaccines and medical interventions, especially when representing PCIC. It is okay to briefly thank a legislator for their work on a specific bill or topic. Your time with legislators is valuable and staying focused on key topics are critical. If the conversation strays off-topic, bring the focus back to informed consent. Possible bridges to bring the conversation back on topic include:

- a. There are many other important topics I am interested in but today I'd like to be sure you're aware that there are risks to vaccines and, where there is risk, there must be choice.
- b. Personally I have my opinions on that topic but for now I'm interested in ...
- c. I appreciate the off-topic information but would like to transition to the lack of information in the public sphere for vaccine risks based on safety concerns.

14. If there are questions that you can't answer – great! WRITE THEM DOWN. This gives you a perfect opportunity to contact them again. You do NOT need to be an expert. You know more than they do and you know where to find information. Don't hesitate to answer a question with, "I don't have the answer to that today, but I will find it and get back to you." Thank them for their time, again.

15. Close with a summary statement if you are comfortable with that. Ex: "Thank you for meeting with us. I really enjoyed talking with you. I hope that we can count on you to protect my rights in this area."

16. Send a thank you card. **Follow up with information to answer any unresolved questions.** It's best to do this as soon as possible before it falls off your to-do list!

17. Keep following them on social media and email. Meet with them a couple of times a year and try to attend one or more of their community events. If appropriate, volunteer to help with their re-election campaign.

18. If you're still reading this list of tips know that we appreciate you and your efforts. A great result for your time spent advocating for your rights is that your legislator will keep you and your story in mind when a medical freedom discussion occurs in the future. If your legislator is not interested in supporting your right to informed consent you can feel confident that you've done what you can to educate and personalize this movement.

An effective advocate must always be Calm, Courteous, and Credible.

Let's Go!!!