

A Guide to Successful Advocacy



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Prepared by



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THE ARTS ARE AN ESSENTIAL INDUSTRY!
From a Campaign to a Movement: Arts Advocacy Today

The purpose of Californians for the Arts' "A Guide to Successful Advocacy" is to provide delegates with advocacy tools to ensure a successful meeting with your California legislator and/or their legislative staff. California elected officials and their staff want to understand the effects of the issues that are important to their constituents, and who better to convey information than arts, creative & cultural advocates from their district.



This guide will help you navigate through a legislative visit and provide tips for success during and after your meeting, including pertinent information to enhance the content of your message.

What is advocacy?

- Building a relationship with your legislator.
- Issue identification, research, and analysis.
- Educating your legislator and their staff on issues of concern.

Advocacy is all of the above. It can be a simple "drop in" to your legislator's office, or as complex as providing detailed analysis on how a piece of legislation could negatively impact a community. Any activity that supports an idea or cause is advocacy, relationship building, and educating legislators and the public.

Summary of Easy Steps for Setting up a Meeting with Your Legislator

Step 1: Identify who is your Elected Official

Step 2: Request a meeting

Step 3: Follow up

If you do not hear back, follow up!

Step 4: Use a Legislative Request document to guide your conversation and asks with the Representative or arts staffer.

Step 5: Let us know how it goes.

REMEMBER: your elected officials want to be helpful if they can. If you follow the following detailed tips, you should be able to have a productive visit with your legislators and/or their staff and be well on your way to establishing a good working relationship into the future.

Detailed Steps for Setting up a Meeting with Your Legislator



- I. **Identify your State Legislators.** Visit <https://www.votervoice.net/CAARTS/Home> on the bottom right to enter your address to receive a list of all your elected representatives.
- II. **Contact your legislator's office to send a "Meeting Request" via email to the Scheduler.** We will provide you a list of all Legislators contact information including their Chief of Staff, and Scheduler. Be sure to cc them all in your email.
- III. **We will provide you with a meeting request template that includes:**
 - » The ideal date range of your visit during Advocacy Week. The more meeting times you provide for that day, the more likely you will get a meeting with your legislator. Be flexible with your schedule.
 - » Provide a brief synopsis of the issues you would like to discuss. Limit this list to three topics.
 - » A detailed list of key Legislative Requests for 2021 will be provided by April 12th.
- IV. **If you do not hear back within a couple of days, resubmit your request** and state that you are "just checking back in regarding your meeting request for DATE/TIME." But don't be too aggressive.

Prior to Your Meeting

- I. **Learn your legislator's committee assignments** as well as any general biographical information which is usually available on their web page. You never know what you might have in common – high school, college, military, etc. A personal connection is invaluable.
- II. **Try to determine if your legislator has been supportive of arts, cultural or creative issues.** You can research on their website or ask CFTA!
- III. **If your legislator has been supportive, you want to thank him or her.** If not, you want to educate them on these issues and ask for their support.
- IV. **Familiarize yourself with the Legislative Request** document created by CFTA.
- V. **If you are meeting in a group setting with other delegates, assign roles and talking points** so you are clear on who will cover which issue and when you plan to speak.

During a Legislative Visit



- I. **Team Captain:** Prepare a one to two-minute brief introduction of yourself and/or your group. Then allow the group to introduce themselves and where they are from.
- II. **Person 1 or Team Captain:** Start with a positive note by finding some common ground. If your legislator has supported a priority issue for the arts (i.e., voted for or co-sponsored a bill), thank them for that support.
- III. **Person 2:** Have a local representative from the electeds district provide an uplifting yet brief example of a positive artistic story or program occurring in their jurisdiction.
- IV. **Person 3 or Team Captain:** Please keep in mind your meeting will only last 15 to 20 minutes so you want to avoid getting distracted with non-essential conversation. Use the Legislative Request document from CFTA as a guide to focus your requests. Focus on 2 to 3 items that are relevant to your group and to the elected.. Keep the conversation simple and polite. While legislators and their staff are educated on most issues, they are typically "generalists" unless it pertains to specific issues within the jurisdiction of their committee assignment. For instance, a legislator that sits on the Budget Committee will have a much better understanding of funding issues (and perhaps allocations related to the arts), than a legislator that sits on the Health Committee.
- V. **When discussing specific topics, it is important to use personal stories** to explain why the issue needs action. Explain a position with facts and use personal stories to back it up.
- VI. **Be positive and avoid partisanship.** It is also extremely inappropriate to discuss political contributions, whether personal or from an Arts Political Action Committee (PAC). Also, it is illegal to give your elected officials a campaign contribution in their official legislative office.
- VII. **Ask the legislator to take a specific action**, such as co-sponsoring a bill or committing their support for increase in funding. If a legislator agrees to support an issue (i.e. co-sponsor a bill or vote in favor of that bill) move on to the next issue. Once they have said "yes," move on the next "ask." Do not waste time rehashing an issue they have agreed to support.
- VIII. **Show openness to counterarguments** and politely respond to them if it seems appropriate to do so. Do not argue with the legislator or their staff.
- IX. **If the answer to a question from the legislator or staff is not known to you**, it is okay to say so. Simply reply that you are not sure of that answer, offer to get an answer and follow up with that answer. This actually provides a good opportunity to keep the conversation going after your meeting ends.
- X. **If you are unable to meet with your legislator, do not underestimate the influence of their staff!** While they may be young (the average age of a legislative staffer is usually 27), they are educated, well informed, and help provide direction to the decision-making process of the legislator.
- XI. **If there is time, it is appropriate to ask the legislator for a picture or screen shot.** If you use Twitter, Facebook or Instagram, post your picture with a nice comment, making sure to include your legislator's Twitter handle or hashtag so they see your positive feedback and can share your post with other constituents. We will provide a list of social media handles of all elected officials.
- XII. **Thank them for their time upon leaving.**

Meeting Logistics

- I. **Be prepared to organize virtual meeting logistics.** Have your group log in at least 15 minutes prior to the meeting to organize or schedule a meeting prior.
- II. **Be sure that your name and organization are listed** so that you may begin to form relationships and networking with your legislator and staff.
- III. **Be on time and ready for the meeting.** These meetings last in the range of 15 minutes, so you will want to be prepared and ready.

After Your Legislative Visit

- I. **Write a thank you letter or email summarizing your visit.** Thank the legislator again for his or her support on your issues and most importantly, if there was a certain bill they agreed to co-sponsor or issue they committed to support, remind them.
- II. **Maintain ongoing communication with the legislator and their staff** through letters, emails, or calls. Offer to serve as a resource to them on issues related to arts and culture.
- III. **Find out when the legislator will be back in their district** and offer to host a visit to your organization.
- IV. **Team Captains should communicate with CFTA if the Legislator agrees to support our requests** or if they need more information.

Ongoing Advocacy - Stay In Touch Year Round



- I. **Phone your legislators office and simply ask, "what are they doing to support the arts in their district?"** and encourage them to support our calls to action.
- II. **Use our online template letter system and send letters/tweets asking for funding support** and reopening guidelines for the arts industry. *Tip: This takes less than 5 minutes.*
- III. **Ask for a virtual meeting with your legislator** and use our testimonies and calls to action throughout the year as guides or contact us and we can help you set it up! *Tip: You may meet with a staff member. They are valuable people to get to know and they will give their boss a report on the meeting.*
- IV. **Provide information on great news you are doing in their districts.** Most electeds have social media and newsletters that go out to their community. They are looking for content and usually are happy to share positive stories.
- V. **Request a letter of support or a season announcement** for your performance arts playbill or gallery opening.

Remember, these are your elected representatives -
it is their duty to serve their constituents but they cannot solve the problem
if they do not know it exists.

**Thank you for participating in Arts Advocacy Week
- your voice matters!**



Tips for an Effective Legislative Visit

DOs

- Thank the legislator and/or staff for taking time to meet with you and the delegation.
- Thank the legislator and/or staff for considering your viewpoint.
- Be forthright and informative in your communications.
- Stick to an agenda.
- Keep it simple and brief.
- Provide an "Ask." Tell the legislator or staff what you would like them to do.
- Provide the legislator and/or staff with a persuasive argument.
- Cite specific issues and data and use personal anecdotes.
- Offer to provide additional background information on the issue(s) you are discussing.
- Offer to assist the legislator and/or their staff in any way possible.
- Let the legislator and/or their staff know why you care about the issue.
Again, share personal stories.
- Tell the legislator and/or their staff how the issue affects you and his or her constituents.
- Expect your legislator and/or their staff to be responsive to your views.

DON'Ts

- Don't be narrowly ideological.
- Don't be argumentative or confrontational.
- Don't be close-minded.
- Don't be overly technical. Simplify when necessary.
- Don't lose track of time. Just like you, legislators and their staff are extremely busy and you should be respectful of their time.
- Don't expect your legislator to drop everything and focus solely on your concerns.