

## Effective Advocacy for PARSE Members

The purpose of this document is to help PARSE members when they want or have been asked to contact their senators or representatives on issues of importance to all retirees. While this document is not all inclusive it should help PARSE members be comfortable in an advocacy role. This document is primarily for face to face meetings at the local level with legislators.

Things to know/consider:

1. Limit your contact to a single issue.
2. Be sure you know and understand the issue; sometimes you might be asking the legislator to support an issue but other times you want them to vote against something. The Government Relations Committee will identify issues, the PARSE position (yes or no) and give some background information but you need to do your homework too. Understand the issue, where it is in the legislative process, think about what you may know about the issue that the person you are contacting may not know.
3. Try to learn where the legislator stands on this position.
4. A face to face meeting is the most effective contact but respect the legislator's time. Make an appointment, they are busy but will see you if you schedule time. When calling to make appointments have an idea how much time you think that you might need and ask for that amount of time.
5. Keep in mind that you are there to promote a PARSE position on an issue; be sure that you do no harm to PARSE or retirees as a result of your contact.
6. Before your meeting do some "roll play" scenarios. Think - if you were the legislator what would you want to hear that would elicit a desired response?
7. At the beginning of your meeting introduce yourself and any others who may be with you. Even if you have met the individual before it is a good idea to remind the legislator of your name and who you represent.
8. It is ok to engage in some small talk or pleasantries but you are there for a purpose and only have a limited amount of time with this person. Take the initiative and move to the discussion to your reason for being there. Try not to get off topic; keep the conversation on point.
9. **Most important, ask in specific terms what outcome you are looking for.**  
**Example: will you help us by voting for the bill or will you help us by voting against the bill, be specific. If possible, be very sure what their answer is. If their answer is conditional, it is not an agreement with your position. If they do not agree with your position, or are undecided, ask if additional information could help them reach a positive position.**
10. Again remember to stay on topic, be brief and always courteous. You may not always get the answer you want but never be argumentative or threatening.
11. **Be a good salesperson once you have made a sale quit while you are ahead. You have only one way to go after they have agreed.**
12. At the conclusion of your meeting thank the legislator regardless of their response; don't burn any bridges with him/her, you may need to visit them again on another issue.
13. Follow up promptly with a thank you letter (not an email); template examples have been provided for you.
14. Update your chapter president on your visit and results.