

Effective Advocacy for PARSE

How to Guide

Now that you have volunteered to be a member of your Chapter's Government Relation Committee (GRC) what next?

At some time you will be asked to visit your senator or representative in his or her local office. The following information is designed to help you be comfortable in doing this and to give you some guidelines to follow for those visits.

1. Get to know the names of the people you may be visiting. Try to learn where they stand on positions of interest to PARSE. The GRC will PROVIDE information, if available, to you but you should do some research as well.
2. You have been provided with a separate document that gives you general information on PARSE; be sure to read that document and be able to talk about PARSE. Be sure to review the information that provides you data on the economic impact pensions have on the local economy.
3. It is strongly recommended that you go to the offices you might be visiting and introduce yourself to the staff. Get their names, phone numbers and email addresses. The staff will be most important to you because they generally control access to the individual you want to see. The staff in the office are also important because they may well be the ones who review legislation and make recommendations to the senator or representative.
4. You may not want to hear this but bringing up the idea of a COLA is not recommended in the current political and economic climate.
5. One of the most important things to remember is to always stay calm. You may not always get the response or commitment that you want. You may not get what you want at this meeting but you don't want to shut the door for other issues. First rule for effective advocacy is DO NO HARM!
6. You are one of a team from your chapter and you might want to do some roll-play scenarios before you make any visit. Think - if you were the legislator what would you want to hear that would elicit a desired response?
7. If you get a "no" or "no commitment" on any issue don't just end the meeting. You can politely ask the person what information might be helpful to change their mind. If you can move someone from a "no" to "I'll think about it" you have succeeded. If they say they will not change their mind don't argue or get angry – remember you may need to come back on another issue. First rule for effective advocacy is DO NO HARM!
8. If the Government Relations Committee reaches out to you make a visit on an issue review the material and then call one of the contacts you have made and request a meeting with your team. (Only one member of the team needs to schedule the meeting).
9. 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.

10. 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 the discussion to your reason for being there. Try not to get off topic; keep the conversation on point.
11. **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.
12. 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.
13. **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.**
14. 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.
15. Follow up promptly with a thank you letter (not an email); template examples will be provided for you.
16. Update your chapter president on your visit and results.