

ORGANIZING A DELEGATION VISIT

What is a Delegation Visit?

A Delegation Visit (DV) is a meeting in a legislator's district with a group of constituents to discuss a public policy issue. For a House member, there should be 5-10 constituents. For a Senator, there should be 8-20 constituents.

How do I schedule a DV?

Call the legislator's State House office and ask to speak to their aide. If you're calling a Senator, ask to speak to her/his scheduler. Identify yourself and explain that you're with the Campaign for Our Communities. Tell them you want to have a meeting with the Rep/Senator in their district with a group of constituents. Explain that you want to talk about the state budget and the need for revenue. Tell them you'd like about 45 minutes of the legislators' time. Say that you'd like to schedule the meeting between now and March 31st (April 30th for Senators).

Keep in mind that getting the visit scheduled is often the most time consuming part of the process, so you should work to get it on the legislator's calendar sooner rather than later.

Where and When Should the DV Be?

Evenings or Saturday mornings usually work best for constituents. You can have the meeting at someone's house, at a room in the public library, or even at a coffee shop or restaurant. Think about what the best choices are in your community - easy to get to, well known in the community, free, with minimal distractions. Unless the legislator insists, you should try to avoid having it in the State House. This makes it hard for constituents to get there and alters the power dynamic.

Once I Get it Scheduled, What is the First Thing I Should Do?

The very first thing you should do is email Andi the date, time and location of the meeting! She will then get that information out to the broad coalition and put you in touch with others who may have members to contribute from that particular legislator's district.

Who Should Attend the DV?

You should try to build as diverse a group of constituents as possible. It's **crucial** that everyone at the meeting actually live in that legislator's district. It's also important that you reach out to the other organizations that are interested in working with you on the DV – that is part of your role. You can get that information from Andi. You should always assume that some percentage of people who tell you they'll attend will cancel at the last minute. So if you're trying to get 10 people, you should book 13 or 14. The worst thing that will happen is that you'll have too many people, and that's a good problem to have!

What Should I Do if I'm not Finding Enough People to Attend?

Call Andi right away if you're running into trouble – don't wait until the last minute. She may be able to help beat the bushes.

How Should We Prepare?

The easiest thing to do is to have all the participants arrive about an hour before the legislator is supposed to get there. That way you can assign people different parts of the agenda and do a little rehearsal. You should select an emcee who will greet the legislator, begin the conversation, and move the discussion along from person to person. You should be prepared to answer objections from the legislator. Possible objections are to be found in the FAQ document, and you can assign particular individuals to address particular questions. Another thing you can do to prepare is to talk to Andi ahead of time to gather any background on the legislator. This can sometimes be very helpful.

What Specifically Should We Discuss?

- Have everyone go around the room and say their name and where they live (community and/or street). This should take no more than 2-3 minutes.
- Have no more than 3 people talk about the impact of budget cuts and inadequate revenue in their community. These 3 people should represent a variety of different concerns. Each person should talk for about 3 minutes.
- Have one person talk about how these ongoing budget problems in MA are the result of inadequate revenue, and specifically the result of over-zealous cutting of the income tax. This should take 2 minutes.
- Have one person talk about why it is important to address not only the transportation financing problem, but also the other problems in the community. One point to make in this section is that a strong economy is dependent not only on good infrastructure, but also on a good education system, affordable higher education and safe communities. This should take 2 minutes.
- Have one person talk about why new revenue is the solution. This section should be somewhat aspirational, ie, “Imagine what kinds of schools we could have if we could reduce class sizes and have enrichment programs like art and music!” Again, 3 minutes.
- Have one person talk about why it is important to raise revenue in a way that is fair. Specifically, low- and middle-income people should be protected from big increases. The income tax is the best way to achieve this. Once again, 3 minutes.
- Have one person do The Ask. This should take 1 minute.

Ideally, there will be questions and discussion throughout this conversation, which is fine. But the emcee should keep their eye on the clock, keep the conversation flowing, and prevent anyone from droning on for too long. At the 40 minute mark, it’s time for The Ask, and the emcee should give the person assigned to The Ask a signal that the time has come!

The Ask

The Ask is where you ask the legislator if you can count on their support for raising new revenue in 2013. You can either ask for support for “An Act to Invest” or you can ask for support for the 3 principles:

- Significant new revenue
- Raised in a way that protects low- and middle-income people from big increases
- Used for a broad array of services

Someone should be assigned the task of doing The Ask. If you do not assign this task, then everyone will expect someone else to do it and no one will ask!

Listen carefully to the answer. Anything short of “Yes, you can count on my vote!” is not a yes. Do not confuse friendly, encouraging comments with “YES.” If the answer is “NO,” do your best to persuade. Think about ranking the person using a 1-5 system:

1=with us

3=undecided

4=leaning against us

2=leaning towards us

5=opposed

Make a note of any particular objections or concerns the legislator had.

What Should I do if the Legislator Cancels?

This will happen to some percentage of you. When the aide calls to tell you, try to get it re-scheduled right then, in that conversation. Remind them of the timeline (before March 31st). Insist that this meeting is important to the constituents who were planning to attend. If they offer to send an aide instead, call Andi to discuss if that’s the best way to go. Sometimes it is the best option, so hash that out with someone. If they’re really difficult, call Andi for advice.

What Kinds of Materials Should we Give the Legislator?

Make up a folder that includes the basic fact sheet and a copy of the legislation. You may want to include some of the Mass Budget slides as well. There may be other materials we develop, but for now that should suffice. Do not give them the materials until the meeting is over and they’re ready to leave, or else they’ll spend the whole time reading materials and not listening to your group!

What Should I do to Follow Up?

- After the legislator leaves, have a quick discussion about how you all thought it went. Make sure you all agree on what the answer was to The Ask and how this person should be ranked on the 1-5 scale.
- It is nice to have a note card written out, thanking the legislator for their time, ahead of the meeting. You can then have the whole group sign the card right there in the room, and mail it the next day.
- It is nice to have a sign-in sheet for the attendees that you can then copy and send to the legislator. Legislators appreciate this.
- Call Andi the next day and report on how it went. This will help us to determine the right next step for that particular legislator.

Need Help? Contact Andi Mullin, Director of the Campaign for Our Communities at Andi@ourcommunities.org or at 617/878-8316. If it’s an emergency, call Andi’s cell phone at 617/513-1599.