



# 9 Million Reasons To Speak Up

## *Tips for Meeting With Legislators*

Meeting with a legislator for the first time can seem intimidating, but these tips will help you become an effective advocate for children!

- **Make an appointment:** Visit your legislator's website at [www.legislature.ca.gov](http://www.legislature.ca.gov) to find your legislator's phone numbers. You can either visit in the Capitol or in the legislator's district office. Call the preferred office and ask to speak to the scheduler. Tell the scheduler that you are representing (number) of local PTA members and would like to schedule a meeting to discuss issues affecting children. If the member is not available, ask for an appointment with the chief of staff, the legislation director or the district director (district office only). You may need to follow up with an e-mail to the scheduler.
- **Go with a group and prepare for the meeting.**
  - Invite between two and 10 other PTA leaders and members to go with you.
  - Hold a planning meeting to discuss a meeting agenda, [Message to legislators](#), and to identify who will open the meeting, take notes, close the meeting, etc. Have one or two people designated to share personal stories of how the budget cuts are affecting their school and their children. You might only have 15 minutes with the legislator, so it is important that you control the meeting and communicate your key messages.
  - Check the legislator's website for legislation, positions and priorities. You might already have some common ground for discussion. If the legislator disagrees with PTA's positions, it is important to bring facts to back up your talking points (refer to our [Fact sheet](#)).
- **Be on time:** Plan to go early and meet somewhere nearby for coffee, so that you don't get caught in traffic unexpectedly. Know that the legislator may be late, and prepare for this (have enough money in the parking meter, arrange child care, etc.).
- **Wear appropriate business attire:** There's no need for highly dressy clothing, but avoid jeans, T-shirts, plunging necklines, etc.
- **Bring**
  - **Business cards:** You can print cards for yourself and the others with the local PTA logo, name, title and contact information
  - [Message to legislators](#): this is a document for the legislator to keep after you leave
  - [Tips for visits](#), [Fact sheet](#), camera and agenda

- **Meeting agenda**

- **Open meeting:** Person designated will thank the legislator or staff person for his/her time and lead a round of introductions. Remind the legislator that you are constituents.
- **Discuss talking points:** Immediately get into your key points of the meeting. Legislators will sometimes engage in small talk and then abruptly need to go to their next appointment.
  - Make sure that any positions you convey are PTA's. You may wear other hats, but you are representing PTA in this meeting.
- **Don't assume that a legislator has a certain position:** None of our legislators has voted to avoid cuts to education and children's services in the past two years.
  - **If a legislator agrees** with PTA's positions, we need to urge that he/she stand firm against cuts, borrowing and gimmicks
  - **If a legislator disagrees** with PTA's positions, be prepared to counter arguments. Always stay calm and respectful and keep in mind that he/she is more likely to listen if you present cogent facts and share personal stories in a confident but civil manner. **Remember** – you are likely to be more of an expert on education and children's issues than the legislator.
- **Connect with the legislator or staff person in a way that builds a relationship:** Is there a good time to conduct a letter or phone campaign (for supportive legislators)? Would the legislator be willing to visit a local school and see firsthand how the cuts are affecting the children?
  - **Never, ever, discuss a candidacy for elected office:** This is a violation of IRS 501(c)3 rules governing PTA's position as a nonpartisan nonprofit organization.
- **Wrap up:** Thank the legislator or staff person for his/her time, hand out the leave-behind Message to legislators ? and business cards, and summarize key messages. Ask an aide to take a photo of the group with the legislator (with the camera you brought).

- **Follow up:**

- **Send a thank you note** after the meeting, reiterating the key messages.
- **Follow up on any action items:** If there was discussion about a school visit or other action, follow up with the appropriate staff member.
- **Provide a summary of the visit** at a PTA meeting, the PTA newsletter and the website. Remember to include a photo.
- **Send a press release** of the meeting to the local news outlets – photos help!

[Click here to join PTA!](#) *Anyone who cares about children and youth is welcome.*

**Speak up for children.**

*(How many more reasons do you need?)*

Please visit the [California State PTA website](http://www.capta.org) – [www.capta.org](http://www.capta.org) – for more information.