HOW TO HOW TO MEET WITH LEGISLATORS

Meeting with your state legislator is the most effective and rewarding way to advocate for death with dignity. There's no greater persuasive force than looking someone in the eye and sharing a personal story about why a death with dignity law will make a difference.

If you’ve never met with a lawmaker before, meeting face-to-face is memorable and often unforgettable. Even if you didn’t vote for the legislator, as your district's representative in the state legislature they work for you and have a duty to hear your concerns.

Don’t know who your representatives are? Don’t worry, that’s actually very common. Check your legislature’s website or OpenStates.org and use your address to find out who represents you in your state legislature.

BEFORE THE MEETING
Your meeting with your State Representative (Delegate, Assembly Member) or Senator starts long before you see them face-to-face. The better you prepare for the meeting, the more effective it will be.

Some of the things to do in order to help you prepare for your legislator meeting include:

• **Contact the legislator** (their office) by email or phone to request a meeting.
  • *Mention you are a constituent* and where you live (town/city).
  • *Refer to the bill* you wish to discuss, if there is one, or simply state you wish to discuss death with dignity legislation or topic.
  • *Suggest specific dates and times* for the meeting.
• **Confirm the time and place of the meeting** one day before the scheduled date.
• **Prepare no more than five pages of information** to leave with your legislator, including
  • one page summary sheet explaining the bill (example)
  • one page talking points (example)
  • one to three pages containing personal stories, data excerpts, or FAQs
• **Make sure your leave-behind materials include contact information** for you or your group.
• **Practice or role-play ahead of time** to get more comfortable if you aren’t experienced in meeting with lawmakers. Keep it short and focused; you’ll likely have 15 minutes or less for the meeting.
THE DAY OF THE MEETING

The meeting with your legislator will typically take place at the legislator's district office or a public place like a cafe or coffee shop. During the legislative session, the legislator may request to meet you at your State Capitol, provided you can make it there.

No matter where you meet, follow these guidelines before you set out:

- **Verify the meeting details**, including location and time, and check the directions and any parking instructions.
- **Be on time.** Build in a buffer to find parking, and, if the meeting is at a legislative building, go through security and navigate the building.
- **Dress professionally**, e.g. as if you were going to a job interview. It's better to be overdressed than too casual.
- **Have something to eat/drink** ahead of time.
- **Remember the legislator is just human**—a person like you. Being a state legislator is their job, often unpaid and often performed outside their regular, paying work.
- **Be prepared to wait or meet with a staff member** if your legislator isn’t available (they may be at a hearing, floor session, or caucus). Be patient. It is common for legislators to be delayed or redirected at the last minute.
- **If your appointment is cancelled**, ask to leave a note and schedule a new meeting time.
DURING THE MEETING

It’s time to meet your legislator! These tips should help the meeting run smoothly and be an effective advocacy action in support of aid in dying:

- **Introduce yourself as a constituent** who lives in your legislator’s district and thank them for meeting with you.
- **Share your story.**
- **Outline the reasons you support the death with dignity;** include bill number if applicable.
- **Present your legislator with your prepared materials.**
- **Be brief and to the point.** Aim for your introduction, story, and arguments to take about 4–5 minutes.
- **Ask your legislator about their position on the bill** and the reasons for the position.
  - If the position is *positive,* thank the legislator for their support of death with dignity and ask them how you can help them advocate for it.
  - If the position is *negative,* give a brief response to the main points of contention. If you don’t know how to respond, revert to FAQs and any available polling data that show the majority of Americans / state residents / legislator’s constituents support the bill.*
  - If the legislator does not yet have a position or declines to answer one way or another, ask when you should be back in touch to hear how they intend to respond.
- **If your legislator asks questions and you don’t have ready answers, simply say, “I don’t know but I will find out.”** Figure out how soon the answer is needed and be sure to email or call the legislator with a timely answer. Saying “I don’t know” can be a strong political move because it gives you an opportunity to address another aspect of the issue, include more supporting information, and lets you touch base with the legislator again.
- **If it feels right, ask your legislator to take a photo with you** and post it on your social media channels after the meeting.

* You can find these resources at DeathwithDignity.org/FAQs.
ATTENDING A LEGISLATOR MEETING AS A GROUP
You might join forces with other supporters of death with dignity and meet with your district’s legislators as a group. In addition to the above advice, follow these tips:

- **Limit your group's size** to no more than 5 or 6 people so it stays manageable.
- **Identify a leader** who will speak on your group's behalf. This is ideally the person who is best versed with the bill you are advocating for so they can answer the legislator’s questions or address their concerns.
- **Agree on (and practice) talking points** so your group is unified.
- **Have your group leader initiate and facilitate the discussion**, from thanking the legislator and quickly introducing each member to asking their position to answering questions or addressing objections.
- During introductions, each group member should take no more than a couple of minutes to
  - introduce themselves as a constituent who lives in the legislator’s district, and
  - share a story why the death with dignity bill is important to them.

AFTER THE MEETING
The meeting with your legislator was the first step in cultivating an effective grassroots lobbying relationship with them, particularly if they're supportive of death with dignity. What happens after the meeting is just as important as what happens at the meeting.

It is crucial to follow up in a timely fashion to any requested materials or information, or to answer any questions you said you could not answer at the meeting. If you attended as a group, compare notes following the meeting to be clear on what was said or committed to.

Similar to what we suggest doing after submitting testimony to your legislature, send a handwritten thank-you note to the legislator for meeting with you (if you met with their staffer, refer to that fact in your note). The power of courtesy in the form of a hand-written note should not be underestimated. If you met with your legislator as a group, each person should send their own, individual note. As with all grassroots advocacy, there is strength in numbers,

If your legislator doesn’t meet their agreed deadline for following up with you, ask for a response or a new deadline. Be patient and be persistent.

FEEDBACK
We’d love to hear how your meeting went. Would you take a moment to share your experience meeting with your legislator? Please take a minute (literally) to fill out a short questionnaire at DeathwithDignity.org/Take-Action/Share-Experience-Meeting-Legislator/