



Advocacy Tips

Anyone can advocate. It's our right as Americans and too many of us think it's too hard or it's not our place. Here are a few tips on working with your elected officials on the local or state level. I have found them especially helpful in representing CVBs at the Capitol:

Refine a short-spoken presentation-your Elevator Speech
two minutes long

Use a 3 x 5 card with four bullet points as a memorization tool

Describe what you do and how you do it well for your community

Polish it and practice it

Don't launch into your spiel at a social event. Let them know it's nice to see them and that you'd like to schedule some time to talk about your issue. Then call their office to schedule an appointment. A sure way to submarine your issue is to corner an elected official at a social event.

Make yourself a resource for them in your field. By helping them do their job, you increase the chance that they may want to help you do yours. By educating them on your issue you are providing a service for them. Don't ever give information you can't source or back up – if you're caught off guard offer to research and get back to them – and do so quickly.

Don't wait until the legislative session to start a relationship with them. Most people and organizations visit lawmakers or state regulators when they need something. It is rare that someone visits or corresponds with an official to offer to help THEM or just to keep in touch.

Do everything you can to put them on your calendar and make up a reason to go see them every 60 – 90 days depending on the issues at hand. Be vigilant in this regard. Schedule a quarterly coffee meet-up or appointment in their office or breakfast or whatever works.

Adapted from a presentation to the Gwinnett Chamber of Commerce by Julie Ford Musselman on October 25, 2017.