



RHODE ISLAND **CITIZENS FOR THE ARTS**
Building coalition to advance Rhode Island's creative communities

Tips For Speaking With Elected Officials

Know the facts.

Be patient and polite. It is not unusual for a legislator to run late between the day's meetings. Be patient and polite; the legislator's staff will advise you on when he or she will arrive.

Be Prepared. Preparing a one page letter or summary of the key points will help you organize your thoughts. Helps you 'know the facts'. An information sheet specifically designed for your legislator that covers the key points that you discussed with them will give them something to continue to learn from.

Learn about them. Ask your legislator questions about their interests and background. This will not only serve to "break the ice" but also help you guide the conversation around ways they can be involved in your efforts.

Cultivate an ally. Look for ways to cultivate a mutual beneficial relationship. Legislators' goals are most often to build a better community and get re-elected. You make them look good, they make you look good.

Let them know who you are. Make sure you let your legislators know that you reside or work in their district, as they will be more responsive if they know they are speaking to constituents. Tell them your story: how many employees at your organization, your creative business; number of visitors/audience, including out-of-state; how long you have been there, organization established; local economic impact, even anecdotal; you are part of RI CFA.

More of your story: Plans for the future, such as physical expansion, new programming, capital campaigns; Education programs, how you are affecting the immediate community, their district; the role of state funding and policy support to your organization, or your life as an artist.

Make it personal! Legislators are more responsive when you attach the human factor to the issue. Tell stories about how arts funding and state grants have benefited the people and communities in the legislator's district. Attach it specifically to the request: Funds for RISCA, Support for Arts in Education; Public Art program, other policy initiatives, etc.

Say "Thank you!" At the end of your meeting, be sure to thank the legislator for his or her time. Follow up with a note of thanks sent by mail.

Let this be the beginning of a relationship with your legislators. When you get home, send your legislators a note thanking them for their time. Add them to our mailing lists and invite them to local arts events, openings and other activities that they or their families might enjoy. Be a resource to your legislators. If any of them express interest in obtaining information on a certain arts issue or organization, send it. Let RI CFA know if you need help.