

Tips for Planning Your Visit with Illinois State Legislators

- You can find the names of all of your elected federal and state officials by visiting www.elections.il.gov and completing a search by address, zip+4, or district number. From the list you'll be provided, locate your Illinois House Representative and your Illinois Senate Representative. You can also visit www.ilga.gov to learn more information about your representatives, such as contact information and the committees that they serve on.
- Get to know your district legislators before you visit. Visit his or her website, read their biographies and do a news search for recent information and legislative activities, issues or causes.
 - Is he or she a Republican, Democrat or Independent?
 - What committee(s) does he or she serve?
 - Is he or she the author of any recent, significant legislation?
 - Does he or she share a common perspective regarding an issue important to you?
- Identify yourself as your legislator's constituent. Provide your address and telephone number.
- Don't be surprised if your meeting with the legislator turns into a meeting with staff. Meeting with staff and building that relationship can be just as effective. Oftentimes, the legislator is a generalist, who relies upon staff for issue expertise.
- Be confident and secure that you are a credible expert on the occupational therapy profession in Illinois.

Even if you don't know all of the specifics of a bill or issue, your personal support of occupational therapy and the protection of your career and livelihood is the most important story you can share. Relate your real-life experiences about the importance of quality education for practitioners, protection of the profession, its benefits to consumers and its place in the integrated healthcare community.

- Rehearse your key points in advance and practice telling your story. If others are joining you, determine who will say what and when.
- When you arrive at their office, start by simply introducing yourself and telling him or her where you live. This is a good ice-breaker and lets them know you are a constituent. Keep your conversation simple, concise, and clear. Avoid jargon and acronyms. Refrain from making assumptions. Do not presume those you visit with are versed in the issues important to you. The Illinois General Assembly usually sees more than one thousand bills introduced each year.
- Preserve your credibility. If you do not know the answer to a specific question, say so and offer to follow up later.
- To conclude your meeting, ask if there are any questions. Thank him or her for visiting with you, provide your leave-behind materials, and leave contact information.