

# Tips on Speaking to Your Legislator

Compiled by Dr. Elizabeth Turner



Prepare before you go. Achieve credibility by following these tips.

1. Wear professional dress without DKG badges with pins—signals sorority, and the pins can be distracting to your message.
2. Do your business card and/or handouts state what they need to state?
  - \* Key Women Educators
  - \* Delta Kappa Gamma—geographic state
  - \* Mission Statement
  - \* Founded in 1929
  - \* Talking points in professional presentation
3. Materials to leave behind: folder labeled with DKG Educators with brochure, list of legislative priorities, business card, position paper on issues.
4. Practice your handshake and get feedback.
5. Know your audience, and know how long you have to visit.
6. Write out what you want to say. This will help you stay focused and you will be able to get your message across better. (See Quick Fill-in guide)
7. Greet the audience and introduce yourself.
  - \* Who are you? Give your name, telephone number. State if you are part of a group or a registered voter.
  - \* Who are all of you?
  - \* Use your elevator speech for the organization. Why are you addressing them?
  - \* What professional or personal information makes you an expert on the subject.
8. Tell the audience what you are there to discuss with a brief overview of your comments. (See HANDy Guide.)
  - \* Tell them what you are going to tell them.
  - \* Choose three to five points to make, and discuss these items clearly and concisely.
  - \* Use facts or figures to make your case. Know the bill number and name.
  - \* It is often helpful and memorable to make a point using a personal story or anecdote.
  - \* Appeal to the legislator's own experience or background to make a point.
  - \* Explain how the legislator's decision will affect your life. Include who else in your community shares your views, especially if they are from a different background or hold different ideological views.
  - \* Conclude, summarizing your points very briefly. Tell your legislator what you would like done.
  - \* If appropriate, ask if he or she has questions.
  - \* Offer to serve as expert testimony for hearings.
  - \* It is the legislator's responsibility to listen and to make decisions based on their constituency's concerns and needs.
  - \* Write a thank-you note or email or fax, preferably to district offices.
9. Leave a written copy of your comments. (See sample template.)
  - \* Keep it to one page and organize with bullets for easy reading
  - \* Include contact information (name, address, phone, email)
  - \* What you state is as important as what you say.
  - \* Listen carefully—learn more about your lawmaker's position and gain some insight into how this issue may be playing out in the Legislature or Congress.