

WHY Meet with Newly Elected Leaders?

New state and local leaders will take office in January. Where they stand on Prenatal to Three policy issues will have a significant impact on the future of America and all our communities. Here's why you should engage newly elected leaders to improve PN-3 policies in the coming years.

1.

We don't have to settle for more of the same. With new leaders headed into office, advocates have an opportunity to change old patterns and help create better PN-3 policies for their communities.

2.

New Leaders are great for building consensus. Though often overlooked, newly elected leaders, might be the most crucial stakeholders in policy decision-making. New leaders often bring a fresh perspective to the table and are great to build consensus on an issue. New leaders who lobby for the policies can bring other elected officials to the table.

3.

Relationships matter and you can be an early ally. As new elected leaders come into office often advocates may consider going to more senior leadership to get support on policies. This leaves freshman legislators searching for priority legislation to endorse. This means they are most likely to support legislation from someone that has actually engaged them. Engage early and often. As their constituent, you have unique power to educate elected officials on the challenges and opportunities that impact the PN-3 space. A critical component to building this relationship is to be sure to LISTEN. Legislators also want to feel heard and valued.

4.

The early bird gets the worm. Government decision making happens in phases. Elected officials set their priorities, identify issues and approaches to addressing them, create a plan (including time, resources, and budget parameters), and seek input on their budget, policy, or implementation decisions. Once these steps of the process are complete, they'll evaluate their progress on their priorities and begin the process again. If you are engaged early, you can become a linchpin in their policy priorities. They become champions for PN-3 issues.

The Bottom Line: It's not uncommon for federal, state, and local elected leaders to lack a strong understanding of our prenatal to three policy needs. We don't need them to be experts, but we need them to care and to know who their local experts are. And, decision makers at all levels need to know that the PN-3 issues impact all their constituents, regardless of their political affiliation. By engaging with your new leaders, you can help them more effectively serve all the families they represent.

Preparing to meet with your new leaders:



Reach out early and often.

If you don't get a response right away don't take it personally. Reach out from multiple points of contact, email, phone, social media, dropping by or setting an appointment at their office either at the state house or city hall or at their in-home district.



Have a basic background understanding of your legislator.

Do they have a young family? Are they single? Did they go to the local high school? Do they work in the community? ? What are some of the core values that they shared during their campaign? This will help you to understand and connect with their values and beliefs.



Never underestimate the importance of staffers.

Sometimes more important than getting to a legislator is having a relationship with key members of their staff. Often these people have been hand-picked by the legislator because they value and trust their opinion. Always treat staff with respect. They can be the difference between getting a face-to-face meeting or not with an elected official.



Be firm but flexible on meetings.

It's a delicate balance, but as advocates you must be firm on wanting to meet and present your priorities to legislators but also understand that sometimes they have multiple competing interests. That may mean having to reschedule or requesting a shorter meeting. Sometimes a fifteen-minute meeting request is great.

1. That might mean adjusting that timeframe, waiting between meetings, or catching them in the hallway, if need be.
2. This is more than enough time to introduce yourself and leave a positive impression.
3. It opens up the door for follow up conversations.



Always have a policy ask and Always have a personal ask

Always have a policy ask. You are going to be in a room with someone that is a policy influencer. You may simply want to ask them if they will work with you when PN-3 issues arise or ask them if they would like more information about your priority policies. Decide your request in advance and go in knowing that you will ask for it.

Always have a personal ask. Any 1:1 time with an elected official is a chance to build your personal connection. Ask them why they ran for office, what they liked best about campaigning, their favorite thing about their district, challenges they may have faced when raising young children (if relevant), what makes them most proud to be serving the community, etc. Write down their answer and share it with PN-3 campaign leaders.



Please let us know how it went. Use this QR Code to fill out a QUICK report right after meetings! We can share the report with you. Only when we get your feedback can we follow up with additional support and provide better services!