Before the Meeting

**DO:**
Familiarize yourself with the bill or topics you plan to discuss.
You can do this by going to our [website](#), talking to our staff by [email](#), or by calling our Washington office at (202) 662-1770.

Get to know the elected official by going to their website. See what committees they are in; whether they have supported the bill in the past; and find out what you may have in common.

Prepare your talking points. Remember, it is always best to be brief – a legislator’s schedule is extremely busy.

**DON’T:**
Get discouraged by the official’s political leaning. These officials are here to represent you. Perhaps they have simply been misinformed or not informed at all. This is why you are here.

Let personal circumstances get in the way. After all, we all went to someone’s rival school.

During the Meeting

**DO:**
Clearly identify the subject(s) you are discussing, not just by the bill numbers, but by topics.

Explain how you are personally effected by the issues and why you are concerned. This is where it is best to share your personal story and perspective. Tell what it is like dealing with these issues in the trenches of everyday life.

State how this will affect you, your patients, and the elected official’s community at large. Their job is to weigh the pro’s and con’s on behalf of their constituency, so be sure to explain it in those terms.

Try to establish an ongoing relationship with your Representative and Senators. They need legal experts they can trust when they need advice. Why not you? Offer to be their go-to legal professional.

Get the business card of everyone you speak with in the office. The elected official has hired his colleagues carefully, and each one has the legislator’s respect and attention.
**DON’T:**
Assume the legislator knows legal terminology. Though we may all know what subject matter jurisdiction is; it is best to explain things in a manner that can be quickly comprehended.

Get distracted by other topics. Elected officials will often want to connect with you on a personal level, but do not let this monopolize your time with them.

Guess or exaggerate. If you do not know the answer to something, simply say “let me get back to you.” Following your meeting, talk to the ABA, and we will be happy to get you the most up-to-date information we can.

Be offended if you speak to a staff personnel instead of the elected official. The staff members are the issue matter experts and handle the various topics on behalf of the elected official. So be courteous and respectful, because these are the individuals that have the direct ear of the elected official.

Threaten to hold your vote hostage. “I’ll never vote for you unless you do what I want” will never garner the respect you deserve. Present the best argument in favor of your position, and let the facts speak for themselves.

**After the Meeting**

**DO:**
Follow up with the elected official. Sending a quick email thanking them for their time goes a long way to establishing and maintaining a relationship.

Get back to them with any information you offered to gather for them.

Let the ABA staff know how your meeting went. Not only does this help bridge the gap for ongoing efforts in Washington, but you can help us better understand the people we are trying to reach. Not to mention, we would love to revel with you in your success!

**DON’T:**
Let this be the only time you speak to your legislator or their staff. Reach out as often as you would like your voice heard.