

# Factsheet

## Tips on Working With Legislators

### ■ Don't ...

- **Demand an immediate commitment from your representative.** Legislators are not likely to make decisions until they have all the facts. Be prepared to answer their questions and concerns. If you don't know the answer, be honest, find the answer, and get it to them promptly.
- **Get upset if your representative opposes your views.** Many legislators are wary of individuals who get overly emotional or angry. Curb your emotions no matter how charged you are. Remain focused and present all the facts in a clear concise manner and let them present their arguments, as people need to do.
- **Pester your legislator with excessive calls or letters.** As a constituent, your opinion is important to your representative, but repeatedly writing and/or calling may work against you unless you lobby your friends, neighbors, and coworkers to join your efforts by politely writing or calling. It's imperative that your legislator understand that you have an army of people behind you!
- **Turn down any chance for a visit.** If your legislator is not available, seize the opportunity to meet with his or her staff if and when it is offered.
- **Be intimidated.** Your representatives are your friends and neighbors! They want to hear what you have to say. Speak simply and clearly and stay relaxed.

### ■ Do ...

- **Conduct yourself professionally.** Be direct and organized. Dress in conservative business attire for visits. Do not wear any animal rights buttons. Do not take up too much of your legislator's time.
- **Ask for more than you think will pass and be willing to negotiate.** Legislators are more willing to work with people who are open to compromise when it comes to drafting your bill or proposal.
- **Always remain polite.** Your representative may not agree with you on this particular issue, but you may be able to get his or her support for another animal issue at a later date. Never burn your bridges.
- **Always thank your legislator for his or her time and efforts.** Always say "thank you" and follow up with a thank-you call or letter.