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# ADOPT A LEGISLATOR



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Politics is about personal relationships. Political advocacy is about developing stronger relationships with elected officials. These relationships are built through consistent communication — beyond just asking your legislator to support a certain bill or voicing your disapproval over a vote. This means connecting with legislators even when no crisis exists.

Do you know there are legislators out there that never hear from farmers? This means that they may not see first-hand the great work that agricultural organizations are doing on the ground. This means they may not understand why agricultural policies are beneficial to the communities in their district.

### Want to help? Adopt a Legislator!

1. You will need to know which legislators serve your organization's service area.
2. Once you have identified your legislator(s), make an initial connection:
  - Write a letter, introduce yourself and your organization.
  - Include a short story or anecdote that encapsulates your organization's work (a recent landowner protecting his land; a conversation with a supporter, etc.).
  - Send photos of local farms and businesses.
3. Make an appointment to see your legislator in his or her office. There is no need to be nervous about that initial meeting. You're just simply sharing news about your organization's work with the legislator and his/her staff and helping them to understand why agriculture in their district is important. Bring materials like the history of OFBE, county newsletters, annual reports, photos, letters from farmers, copies of Our Ohio or Buckeye Farm News, etc. to share your story. Introduce your legislator to the history and structure of the state and county Farm Bureau, share the accomplishments and network of the organization.
4. Try to meet with the legislator or his/her staff, in district or Columbus, at least 4-5 times the first year in office. Make a point of sharing your organization's success stories of the past months. After the legislators first year, try to visit 2-3 times a year and offer to be a resource on any issues that might come across his or her desk.

5. Develop working relationships with legislative staff. You should know which staffer is best to call regarding various issues and which staffers the legislator relies on in his/her decision-making.
6. Invite your legislator(s) to your organization's events. A few things to consider:
  - If you really want the legislator to attend, you'll need to do more than just send an invite. You'll want to make a personal connection.
  - Avoid dates the legislature is in session, keep in mind that the legislator's calendar can fill up quickly – the more advance notice, the better.
  - Clearly state the expectations of the legislator's role in the event. For example, some legislators may expect a speaking role at an event if they plan to attend.
  - Make arrangements with the staffer who is responsible for the legislator's calendar.
7. Host your legislator by planning an event that capitalizes on a specific priority issue or agricultural activity.
8. Invite your legislator on a private tour of an agritourism business or operating farm. Take lots of photos.
9. Consider bringing along landowners and member supporters when you meet with your legislator(s). Encourage them to tell their story of why agricultural practices must be protected. Limit the number of people to 2-3.
10. Thank your legislator for supporting programs and policies that support your work. Send a letter or make a phone call. If it isn't an election year and you'd like to thank your legislator publicly, consider an article in your newsletter or on your website, a letter to the editor, and/or a post on your Facebook page.
11. When an advocacy issue arises, contact your legislator to vote to support agriculture. Even though your legislator may have a fantastic record on ag issues, the reality is that pressures within the body of the legislature can be very strong. He/she will not know how you feel about a particular issue unless you pick up the phone and call.
12. Add your legislator and key staffers to your mailing list so they receive your newsletters and other important materials.



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