



JOE GAGEN

CAPITOL VISITS

WHAT TO DO AND NOT DO

The DO'S

Be professional, courteous, positive, direct, clear, concise, factual, credible, and specific.

Do your homework.

Always follow up with information you have promised.

Follow up a visit or telephone call to a legislator with an offer to be of assistance in the future.

Use correct forms of address.

Follow the KISS rule: Keep fact sheets, letters, and testimony short. Be sure to include how you can be reached on all fact sheets and letters.

Stay in contact with your legislator—it is the key to establishing a relationship of mutual trust.

Treat members of the legislature as friends, and intelligent citizens.

Attend legislative hearings, committee meetings, budget mark-up sessions, and floor votes on your issues, if appropriate.

Always, always be truthful.

Be reasonable, and realize that everyone thinks their issue is the most important one being considered.

Thank legislators for meeting with you and for their consideration, even if your comments are not well received.

Treat members of the legislature as you would like to be treated. Use common sense.

The DON'TS

Don't give inaccurate information or purposely lie.

Don't be rude to a legislator and/or his/her aide.

Don't make moral judgments based on a vote or an issue.

Don't waste a legislator's or aide's time.

Don't send a form letter.

Don't fail to find out where a bill you are being asked about is in the legislative process.

Don't publicly or privately complain about a legislator or a member of his/her staff. Never start or carry rumors.

Don't hold grudges.

Don't be argumentative or abrasive.

Don't interrupt him/her when he/she is obviously busy.

Don't cover more than one subject, if at all possible, during a visit unless asked.

Don't write a letter longer than one page, if possible.

Don't blame legislators for all the things that go wrong in government.

Don't be offended if he/she forgets your name or who you are, even if it is just five minutes after your visit.