

Action Guide to Meet With Your Legislator

Be a Voice for the Conservation Movement

Virginia Conservation Network (VCN) and our partner organizations cannot win victories for our environment without conservationists like you being involved. Communicate with your legislators throughout the year to show that protecting Virginia's environment is a priority. The following is a guide for how to schedule and have a meeting with your legislator.

Steps for Scheduling a Meeting



SEND AN EMAIL



MAKE A PHONE CALL



SCHEDULE A MEETING

Not sure who your representative is or how to get in touch with them? Go to <http://vpap.org>.

SEND AN EMAIL



The first step to putting conservation on the map this session is easy. Send an email letting your legislator know which issue you want to see action on, and ask to meet in person to discuss it. Regardless of your representative's voting record or campaign rhetoric, this email should be friendly in tone. You should also identify yourself as a constituent. Here's an example:

New Message

To

Subject



Dear Senator Lewis,

My name is Sarah Jane and I am your constituent in the Colonial Heights neighborhood of Norfolk. I am excited about the opportunity to address flooding this session, and would love to talk to you about how you can support coastal resilience efforts. As you know, Norfolk is uniquely susceptible to sea level rise, and so many of us are tired of not being able to make it to work because our streets are flooded. It's vital that we make coastal resilience a priority this year.

I am available the week of December 16 - 21. Do you have some time for a quick meeting?

Thank you for your time and dedication to public service.

Best,
[Name]
[Phone number]
[Email]

Send



For questions or more information, please contact engagement@vcnva.org or call (804) 644-0283.



Follow up your email with a quick phone call 2-3 days later. This puts a voice to the issue, demonstrates your commitment, and serves as a reminder for them to try and find a time to fit you in. You will likely speak with the legislator's aide, and the principles of the phone call are the same: be polite, state you are a constituent, make one clear point about what action you want them to take, and ask to schedule a meeting. Here's an example script:

Hi, is this Senator Lewis's office? This is [insert name], a constituent from the Colonial Heights neighborhood. I sent an email a few days ago to let the Senator know that I am excited about the opportunity to clean up and prevent pollution in the Bay this session, and would love to briefly sit down with Senator Lewis to talk about how he can support those efforts. Can we schedule a time to meet? [...] Thank you!



Meeting with your representative in person is the most powerful way to put conservation on their agenda this year. It allows you to make a connection with your legislator and tell your story about why you care so deeply about protecting our Commonwealth. Stories, not facts or figures, are what move people. Here's an agenda for a typical meeting:

- Introductions;
 - Thank your legislator for their time and for a previous action they have taken (for first-time legislators, you can simply thank them for a position they took on the campaign trail);
- Provide 2-3 facts about the issue you want to discuss;
- Tell your personal story about why this issue is close to your heart;
 - Pick a powerful anecdote and use imagery to make it memorable;
- Make a clear ask that has a yes or no answer;
 - Ex: "Will you support \$80 million for the Stormwater Assistance Fund to help cleanup our local waterways?";
- Get feedback and ask if they have any questions;
 - Prepare answers to anticipated questions in advance;
 - Remember – you don't have to be an expert on the issue. Takes notes on questions the legislator has and bring them back to one of the many advocates in Richmond who can follow up;
- Conclude;
 - Thank them one more time for sitting down with you;
 - Let them know you will follow up with any additional information they requested;
- Send a thank you email (or, better yet, letter) and email any follow-up info.

**Active conservationists like you are what make the difference for our lands, waters, and wildlife.
Thank you for being a voice for the conservation movement.**

