



## **Tips for Developing Relationships with Legislators and Legislative Candidates**

Remember that old adage, “all politics is local”? It’s famous for good reason: because it’s true. Your legislator is responsible for crafting policies that impact you professionally and personally. Once you develop a strong relationship with him, he will turn to you for input on matters you are most knowledgeable about and almost always vote the way of those he is most close to in his district. We have seen this many times over.

Theoretically, we all know this to be true. In practice however, getting to know your legislator - making that first phone call or emailing her - feels daunting. In reality, not only is it easy but you will be surprised to learn that she wants to hear from you and what you are most concerned about. Oral Health Colorado’s lobbying team from Miles Consulting provides you with suggestions on how to get to know your legislator. Don’t know who your legislator is or who is running for election in your area? Don’t worry, we provide information on how to find them too.

### **Who is your Legislator?**

#### ***United States Congress***

Every Colorado resident is represented in US Congress by 2 Senators in the Senate and 1 Representative in the House of Representatives. Our Senators are Cory Gardner (R) and Michael Bennett (D). Colorado has 7 Representatives representing geographical Congressional Districts (CDs). Your Representative is one of the following: Diana DeGette (D-Denver), Mike Coffman (R-Lone Tree), Ed Perlmutter (D-Denver), Ken Buck (R-Windsor), Doug Lamborn (R- Colorado Springs), Scott Tipton (R-Cortez), or Jared Polis (D-Boulder).

#### ***Colorado General Assembly or Colorado Legislature***

Many people confuse their Members of Congress with their Colorado State Legislators, but they are completely different. Every Colorado resident is represented in the Colorado Legislature by 1 Senator in the Senate and 1 Representative in the House of Representatives. Both your Senator and your Representative are determined by the Senate and House district in which you live.

#### ***Start By Finding Out Who Your State Legislators/Candidates Are***

Go to [www.vote-smart.org](http://www.vote-smart.org). Your first step is to enter your 9 digit ZIP code in search area at the top right. If you do not know the 4 digits after your 5 digit ZIP code, enter your 5 digit zip code, click on Search and then follow the directions to figure out the last 4 digits through the US Postal Service website. Once you enter the full 9 digits, you will be able to click on State Legislative where you will find your State Representative and Senator listed. If it is an election year, Vote Smart provides information on the candidates running too. If you click on each of their names, you will see a standard bio, along with evaluations by interest groups, voting records, and other great information. You will also find their website address and email address here.

## **Great Ideas on How to Meet your Legislator/Legislative Candidate**

- Invite her to coffee (see below on how to make that happen). Get to know her, ask about the issues she is focusing on- identify what her values are and then talk about your ideas/concerns in ways that will be meaningful to her.
- If she is running for re-election, volunteer to host a “meet and greet” in your neighborhood or better yet, a fundraiser. Many opt for the meet and greet because it is less overwhelming and equally as effective because your candidate needs to meet voters in order for them to vote for her.
- Volunteer to work on her campaign: candidates are always in need for volunteers to walk blocks with them, stuff envelopes and make phone calls. It is the “grunt work” of campaigns and just as appreciated as giving a contribution.
- Ask for a yard sign to put in your yard – it’s more appreciated than you think it is.
- Make a personal campaign contribution. Even \$25 is greatly appreciated, but the more the better. Once elected, your legislator will remember your financial support.

### ***Make That First Contact***

Send an email or call your legislator. We recommend that you try to meet him in the interim (June – November) when he is less busy with the stress of the legislative session. He will have more time to spend with you and learn about your concerns and issues. He will nearly always respond outside of session. During session, unless you know him well enough, you are likely to hear back from his aide who will pass along your message to him. While we suggest calling him in the interim, you can always send an email message like this:

- Hello, my name is name and I live in your district, in town name. I am tell a bit about your job/career and issues you are interested in. I would like to visit with you to discuss some concerns (or ideas) I have. I can be reached at (contact info). Also, I am interested in receiving any newsletters or emails you regularly send to constituents. Can you add me to your list?

### ***Now that you know your legislator....***

Stay in touch! Call him from time to time with new ideas to help address his efforts or your concerns. Ask to be placed on his newsletter and email lists so that you can stay current on what he is working on and attend events of interest that he is hosting. You want to show that you are part of the solution as well as just addressing problems. Be patient. Remember, your goal is to become a good, trust resource for him and that won’t happen overnight.

## **GET STARTED TODAY!**

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