



Town Hall Toolkit

Speaking at town halls is a great way to ensure that your lawmakers hear about issues that are important to you. Regularly attending town halls is also a great way to build relationships with your lawmakers. With a long legislative session coming up in 2021, these relationships will be extremely important when OLCV's priority bills come up for votes in committee hearings, and (hopefully) on the House and Senate floors. A large and well-informed turnout at a town hall meeting or a community forum is an extremely effective way of sending a strong message of support for environmental issues to your elected officials.

If your lawmaker is supportive of climate action and environmental protections, a show of support helps to solidify his or her position. If your lawmaker is generally not supportive of climate and environmental legislation, it's still helpful for you to attend their town halls and show them that people within their district are concerned. Regardless of party affiliation or whether you voted for/against your lawmaker, they represent their whole district, not just their voters. Most lawmakers want to meet with citizens to hear their concerns and recommendations. It's important for them to hear from a broad sampling of their constituents, because you hold the power of the vote; your opinions carry a lot of weight.

How to find out about Town Hall Meetings

- [Find out who your lawmakers are](#)
- Subscribe to your lawmakers' newsletters ([join their email lists](#))
- Follow your lawmakers on social media (especially Facebook)

Before the Town Hall Meeting

- Try to recruit several others to attend the meeting with you. Be sure to inform them of the date, time, Zoom details, and how to join (e.g. do they need to register before the event?).
- Research your lawmakers. Learn about their voting record, issues they campaigned on, committees they sit on, etc. (You can check [OLCV's Scorecard](#) for their environmental record, and you can visit [VoteSmart.org](#) to look-up full voting history and more).
- Prepare your talking points. Why are you passionate about the issue at hand? What is your personal connection to it? Try your best to tell a story about how this issue impacts you, your family, your community, etc.
- Think about how the elected official will likely respond and prepare follow-up questions. Who are other stakeholders in their district? (Farmers and ranchers, wine makers, small business owners, restaurants and breweries, outdoor recreation areas, etc.)
- Prepare. Practice reading your question/concerns aloud.

At the Town Hall Meeting

- Be on time. Some elected officials may not be on time due to meetings or hearings. Be patient and flexible.
- Dress nicely (yes, even on Zoom). Initial impressions are important in this setting and a good one can only help your message, not detract from it.
- Relax. Do not feel that you need to be an expert. All that matters is that you are an intelligent citizen with voting power. Your best tool will be to show how genuine your concern is for the issue and to share your own personal connection to it.
- Make eye contact. This shows confidence. Speak with authority and remember that they are people too.
- Thank your lawmakers for holding a town hall meeting to engage with the community.
- Listen to questions/concerns voiced by other attendees. Make sure you do not repeat what a previous speaker has presented.
- Introduce yourself (your name, the city/town you live in).
- Be sure to mention that you live in their district.
- Make it personal to you. Your lawmakers will be more moved by your story if they can see how a particular issue has impacted you, your family, and your life. Share why climate action and environmental protection is important to you.
- Offer solutions. Whether stating a specific or general approach to an issue, solutions or feasible alternatives are always well received. If you wish to convey amendments or revisions to legislation, provide your edited version of the bill. Never blame anyone or make accusatory remarks.
- Ask your lawmakers about their leadership on climate and environmental legislation.
- Keep your comments brief, clear, and to the point. Be firm, but don't be rude.
- After you have presented your message, let the lawmaker respond. Listen carefully, and take notes on what the lawmaker says.
- Thank the lawmaker for listening to your concerns, even if they did not agree with your position.