



2021-23 STATE BUDGET ADVOCACY GUIDE

MEETING START AND INTRODUCTIONS

When starting a legislative office meeting, remember to be professional, punctual, and patient. You may have to wait several minutes for the meeting to start. Also, your meeting time may be changed at the last minute. This can happen as policymakers have hectic and unpredictable schedules.

If you arrive before other meeting attendees, recommend that everyone hold off on extensive introductions until all have arrived.

1. Once all parties are present, begin introductions. State:
 - your name
 - that you are a constituent and where you reside (town, city, or village)
 - that you are a *Catholics at the Capitol* participant
 - if applicable, the Catholic organization that you represent and briefly how that entity serves your community

Example: “Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. I’m NAME from CITY/TOWN/VILLAGE and NAME OF PARISH OR CATHOLIC ORGANIZATION, and the Representative/Senator’s constituent. Our parish aids a local homeless shelter.

Today I’m participating in the Wisconsin Catholic Conference’s, or WCC’s, advocacy day, *Catholics at the Capitol*, and would like to speak about homelessness initiatives and a few other items under consideration in the 2021-23 state budget.”

2. Make certain the legislator/staffer has received the *WCC 2021-23 State Budget Issue Brief* through the legislative mail service. Note that you are aware that the Wisconsin Legislature and the Joint Committee on Finance are going to redo the entire state budget proposal.

STAY ON MESSAGE AND BE CONCISE

3. Most meetings with legislators last for 15-30 minutes. Focus on the 3-5 initiatives in the *WCC 2021-23 State Budget Issue Brief* that concern you the most.

4. Use the WCC talking points provided to concisely frame why these 3-5 budget issues are important to you. Personal examples are helpful, but avoid getting into too many details.

Example: “I want to start by highlighting how many more families are coming to our parish food pantry and to local food pantries generally in the past year. Lack of access to a basic need, food, seems to be growing among Wisconsin’s families, especially among children...”

5. Explain that as a Catholic, you support the dignity of every human life and the advancement of the common good. Draw upon your Catholic faith and how it animates your concern for these issues. Briefly describe how these issues impact your own family, friends, parish, or community.

MAKE THE ASK

6. Focus on what you want the legislator to do about these issues and ask for his or her support.

Example: “Would the Representative/Senator support increased funding for school nutrition?”

It’s tempting to want to discuss other topics or issues with a policymaker in these situations, but it’s better to ask for a future visit or follow-up with the legislator at a later date to discuss other issues.

GET FEEDBACK

7. Pause to allow the legislator/staffer to respond and listen to where the legislator stands on the issues presented. Do not be surprised if the legislator/staffer is not familiar with all the issues mentioned. They have to know about many issues and may specialize in areas unrelated to these ones. Remember to be respectful and positive.

DEALING WITH FOLLOW-UP OR QUESTIONS

8. Sometimes you may get limited or negative feedback. It’s important to be courteous and continue to seek information, if possible.

Example 1: “I understand the Senator/Representative’s perspective, but is there any further information that we can provide or anything that I can do that might help the Senator/Representative support this funding?”

Example 2: “If the Senator/Representative would ever like to see how this program is being utilized by families in our community, I’d be more than willing to follow-up on that if the Senator/Representative is interested.

9. Answer any questions to the best of your ability. If you don’t know an answer, state that you don’t know, but that you will have the WCC staff follow-up with the legislative office.
10. If you receive a positive response from an office and there is time remaining, consider asking for additional insight or guidance on how to gain support from other legislators on these issues.

NEXT STEPS

11. End with appreciation and ask if the legislator/staffer could use any additional information. Offer that the WCC can be an ongoing resource for the office.

Example: “Thank you for your time today. Either I or our advocacy partners at the Wisconsin Catholic Conference will connect with you in the next few days with any necessary follow up.”

Any inquiries can always be directed to the Wisconsin Catholic Conference at 608-257-0004 or office@wisconsincatholic.org.