

CCAN Guide to Constituent Meetings

I. Overview of Constituent meetings:

CCAN and the Alliance for Global Warming Solutions will be working with its members to plan constituent meetings to discuss and advocate for the Global Warming Solutions Act. **DON'T WORRY IF YOU AREN'T AN EXPERT.** This is a chance for you to voice your concern as a citizen! These meetings are a great way for legislators to hear directly from constituents who believe that global warming is an urgent issue in need of immediate attention. If you are interested in organizing or attending a meeting with your legislator(s), please send an e-mail to Claire Douglass Claire@chesapeakeclimate.org.

What is the purpose of a constituent meeting? Constituent meetings provide an opportunity for global warming activists to speak to their legislators in an intimate and informal setting about the issue. At the meeting, supporters talk about the reasons why global warming concerns them personally and why they wish to see their legislator specifically support the Global Warming Solutions Act. It also provides an opportunity for legislators to request specific educational materials to help them in their decision-making process and/or to discuss any specific concerns they might have with the bill. *These meetings help to develop long-term relationships with legislators and ultimately influence their decisions. Don't forget: in the end, they are in Annapolis to represent you!*

Do these meetings really make a difference? Absolutely! Legislators like to hear from their constituents about the issues that they care about. *Legislators' views are often influenced by the stories that they hear from people in their district.* These informal and intimate meetings provide an opportunity for supporters to tell their stories and to influence how legislators feel about environmental issues. Many legislators keep tallies of letters, phone calls and visits on a given topic so they know what issues are high priorities in their districts.

How is the date of the event and guest list determined? CCAN and other members of the Alliance for Global Warming Solutions will work with local CCAN chapters and other community groups to get the word out about your meeting. You will schedule the meeting and help get your friends and neighbors to attend. But don't worry you are not alone we can help, by sending an announcement to our members from your district to encourage them to attend too.

What do you need to do? Constituent meetings during session (January-April) in the work week are usually held in Annapolis at the legislator's office. But when session is out many will meet in their districts. All you need to do is pick up the phone and schedule a meeting. Visit this website to find your delegate and his or her contact information: <http://www.mdelect.net/electedofficials/>.

1. Call your elected official and schedule the meeting (set the date/time/location).
2. Send the meeting info to Claire@chesapeakeclimate.org so I can help invite other activists in your district. Get your friends, neighbors and family to attend. The most influential meetings are groups of about 4-5 people.

3. Prepare for the meeting. See below for details
4. Go to the meeting, be attentive and polite, and take notes (see details below).
5. Send all notes and suggestions to Claire@Chesapeakeclimate.org

II. How to Talk with Your Legislator

A personal meeting with your legislator is one of the best opportunities to demonstrate that there is a constituency that cares about the Global Warming Solutions Act and global warming in your district.

Before The Meeting

Think about the purpose of the meeting. You will make a more effective presentation if you go into the meeting with a clear understanding of what you are asking of your legislator. Think about some of the following questions before meeting with your elected official, as they will help you advocate for the bill.

- What are your personal reasons for supporting the Global Warming Solutions Act?
- Why do you care about global warming?
- Why are these issues important to you and Maryland?
- Why should they be priority issues in the state legislature?
- **Who are your representatives?** Find out who your delegates and senators are at <http://mdelect.net/electedofficials/>
- **Learn about your delegate.** Research who these people are and what types of issues they care about. Check out their biography's on the Maryland government's website: <http://mlis.state.md.us/Other/Roster/House.pdf>
- Where does your representative stand on this issue? Are they a co-sponsor or were they in previous years?
- **Prepare:** You do not need to be an expert, but you should be familiar with the basics of the issue that you will be discussing. Familiarize yourself with the issue and read the **fact sheets**, which you can find on our webpage: http://www.chesapeakeclimate.org/pages/page.cfm?page_id=218

During the Meeting

Introduce yourself enthusiastically to your legislator and tell him/her how you are connected to the Global Warming Solutions campaign. Present your views precisely, politely, and persuasively. During the meeting, be welcoming and help encourage conversation about the importance of reducing carbon dioxide emissions and global warming.

1. Start by letting your representative know that you are there to ask for his/her support for the Global Warming Solutions Act.
2. Keep your discussion short and focused. Make the most of your time by being brief and sticking to your topic.

3. Provide personal and local examples of the legislation or issue. **THIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING YOU CAN DO ON A LOBBY VISIT.**

TIPS:

Be honest. If you do not know the answer to the question, that's OK. Assure your legislator that you will find the information and send it as soon as possible. This allows you to contact them again about the issue. Never make up an answer to a question; giving wrong or inaccurate information can seriously damage your credibility.

Listen closely to what the legislator says. Be careful not to get discouraged if you hear criticism in the legislator's questions or comments. Instead, use the questions as a barometer of his or her concerns about the issue and as an opportunity to clarify your argument.

1. Take notes during the meeting and report back to CCAN
2. Thank your legislator for considering your concerns.
3. Leave legislators with no more than five pages of background material.
4. Confirm that you will send any extra information that has been requested.

After the Meeting

- **Summarize** your legislator's response to your concerns and note any indication of future action. Do this right after your meeting in order to make your records as detailed and accurate as possible. To help future lobbying efforts on issues concerning global warming, give a copy to the CCAN staff.
- **Contact** CCAN staff if you need answers to your legislator's questions.
- **Send a thank you letter** to the legislator(s) who attended the meeting. Restate your understanding of the legislator's position and thank them for any support expressed during the meeting. Answer any questions the legislator had. If the meeting was inconclusive, provide a summary of your position and any new information that supports it.

Sample Agenda – Meeting led by constituent host

- I. Overview of Meeting and the Global Warming Solutions Act
- II. Welcome and Introductions
- III. Tell your legislator about the Global Warming Solutions Act and why you support it.
- IV. Group Discussion
- V. Summary and Closure

I. Overview of Meeting and the Global Warming Solutions Act

(Provide one or two sentence summary of the Global Warming Solutions Act).

II. Welcome and Introductions

- Introduce yourself to all participants. Remind all attendees of the purpose of this meeting: to discuss the Global Warming Solutions Act.

- Explain that this constituent meeting is being organized by community members. Allow each participant in the meeting to introduce themselves and say how they are affiliated with CCAN (or another group when appropriate)
 - NOTE: Although it can be tempting to talk about other issues or discuss political affiliation, this meeting is meant to be nonpartisan and focused on the Global Warming Solutions Act. Tell people to feel free to catch the legislators after the meeting if they are interested in talking about other issues.

III. Tell your legislator what the Global Warming Solutions Act is and why you support it

- Share with the group the various human health and environmental problems attributed to global warming (sea level rise, damage to agriculture, spread of infectious disease, exacerbation of many illnesses, etc.)
- Give the legislator a copy of the GWSA fact sheet

IV. Group Discussion

- Invite other members of the group to briefly share their views. Why is this issue so important to them? Make it personal to your community and your district. This is what the legislators need to hear for you to be the most influential.

V. Summary and Closure

- Invite legislators to discuss their thoughts on the requests.
- Briefly summarize your understanding of the member's opinion of the issue and what they intend to do.
 - In many cases you will find that legislators are supportive of the Global Warming Solutions Act and say they co-sponsored the bill or intend to support the bill.
- Thank the legislators and participants for their time.

**Meeting with State Legislators
Report Form**

Host Name: _____

Meeting Date: _____

Number of Attendees: _____

Legislator(s) in attendance:

Legislator(s) positions

Will the legislator(s) support the Global Warming Solutions Act

If the legislator(s) were generally in favor of supporting the Global Warming Solutions Act, what reasons were most important to him or her?

If the legislator(s) were generally opposed to the Global Warming Solutions Act, what reasons did he/she give?

Meeting Dynamics

Did everyone participate?

Did the meeting stay on track?

Other comments on the meeting dynamics?

Constituent meetings are one of the best ways groups like CCAN learn about a decision maker's stance on our issues. Please return this form to:

Claire Douglass

Chesapeake Climate Action Network

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