

# MAKING YOUR VOICE HEARD: SHAPING OUR FOOD SYSTEM THROUGH DIRECT ADVOCACY



**PEOPLE. POWER. PURPOSE.**

Democracy belongs to all of us. Your voice is needed to make sure our government is accountable and exercises its responsibility to protect our health and support natural ecosystems.

Meeting with and calling your elected officials and their staff is one of the most important ways you can influence public policy.

Developing strong relationships with your members of Congress helps make sure they understand and take action on the issues you care about.

## MEETING WITH YOUR CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE

### SCHEDULING THE MEETING



- Schedule your meeting 3-4 weeks in advance by emailing or calling the Congressional office. Some offices may also take meeting requests through forms on their website.
- Communicate the names of participants, the desired length of the meeting, and what topics will be discussed.
- Don't be discouraged if you don't get a response right away—be persistent and follow up.
- If your member of Congress is not available, request a meeting with the staff member who covers agriculture or environmental issues.

### PREPARING FOR THE MEETING



- Identify the issues you want to address and a key legislative ask.
- Identify 4-6 participants who can speak to the issues. These could include farmers, local community members, researchers, and OEFFA policy staff or committee members.
- Research the legislative history of your member of Congress, and think about where you could find common ground.
- Research how your issue affects the state of Ohio generally and your local district specifically. Include statistics, if available.
- Have each participant identify a story from their own experience that relates to the issue.
- Develop a rough agenda that assigns a speaking time to each participant.
- If needed, set up a time for each participant to practice their talking points.

### DURING THE MEETING



- Spend a few minutes on introductions, emphasizing ties to the local district and areas of common ground.
- Stick to your agenda and your talking points, and make sure to finish on time.
- Be friendly and respectful, not argumentative.
- Listen carefully. You may not agree, but you will learn things that can help you in the future.
- Leave printed materials that summarize the issue and any key talking points or asks.

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## AFTER THE MEETING

- Follow up with a thank you note.
- If you were asked for additional information at the meeting, send it promptly.



## OEFFA CAN HELP!

- Contact us if you'd like help scheduling a meeting with your member of Congress or need other assistance making your voice heard.
- Tell us how your meeting went and what you learned.

## CALLING YOUR CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE

You can call your Congressional office to request that they support key legislation or to express your opinion about an upcoming vote. For maximum impact, many constituents can “flood” the office with calls over a period of a day or two. Here are a few tips on calling your member of Congress:

### PREPARE



Think about your message in advance. Write it down. It should include a clear, succinct ask for your member of Congress to take a specific action. If you feel nervous, practice your call in advance.

### CALL



Call the switchboard for the U.S. House of Representatives at (202) 225-3121 or the U.S. Senate switchboard at (202) 224-3121. Ask to be transferred to your representative or senator's office.

### CONNECT



Identify yourself as a constituent and request to speak with an agriculture or environmental staff person.

### DELIVER



Deliver your message in a friendly tone and be respectful of their time. Do not be accusatory or argumentative.



### MESSAGE

If your call goes to voicemail, leave a recorded message with your talking points.



### FOLLOW UP

Thank them for their time and request their name and e-mail address so that you can send follow up materials.



# OEFFA POLICY

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Find more advocacy resources to help you make your voice heard, including tips for using social media, letters to the editor, and more:

[action.oeffa.com/resources-for-action](http://action.oeffa.com/resources-for-action)