

Government Relations Best Practices

- **Invite county, state and federal members and staff to events**, including open houses, field days, and fairs. Wear a name tag, carry business cards, and take pictures to post on social media.
- **Create a sense of ownership** by sharing specific examples of your work benefitting people in their district (a garden, 4-H club project, etc.). This helps the official or staff visualize exactly how we benefit their constituents, which creates buy-in and establishes a desire to support our work. *Always include a photo and stakeholder quotes in printed materials. Did you look at this photo first? They will too! → → →*



- **Relate** what you do **to the official's priorities/interests** and the types of public value we bring, namely: how we 1) help build the economy, 2) protect the environment, 3) ensure safe food, 4) build an effective workforce, 5) build healthy and resilient communities, and 6) build social equality. Sometimes, money speaks more clearly – have a few talking points ready describing your county's return on investment.
- **Two-minute elevator speech.** Describe your work in a way that the public can **understand** and **remember**. Focus on 1-2 facts as takeaways (impacts, not data).
- **Build and maintain relationships** with not just the elected official, but their staff as well. These relationships will continue throughout their careers in public service. It is common for a county supervisor to run for a state office or a congressional seat. Visit with the Board of Supervisors 2-3 times a year, but make sure most of those visits are done by community members, volunteers, 4-H youth, and farmers that benefit from your programs.



- **Visit the capitol with Anne Megaro.** Share the impact of your work especially on topics that are of immediate interest to the member's district and their priorities. Let them know that you are available to provide technical assistance or expert testimony.
- **Don't have an agenda.** As soon as you have an agenda, you lose credibility as an unbiased, trusted scientist. Let the science speak for itself.
- **Follow-up!** It's nice to be nice. Send a thank you note or email after each meeting or event. Handwritten is better. Written by constituents benefiting from your work is best.

Important differences between communications with local, state, and federal officials:

- While we can indicate our needs and ask for support with many audiences (e.g., funding organizations, local boards of supervisors, etc.), we must take into consideration other factors when talking to elected state or federal officials and their staff.
- We can educate and inform: e.g. share our knowledge with the legislature or participate in hearings as expert witnesses. (Contact Anne Megaro for a clarifying disclaimer to be included with your testimony).
- We can say: "We are here, this is what we do, see our impact" However **we cannot take positions on bills or ask for budgetary support** without expressed consent from the UC Office of the President.

Why can't we ask for support from state and federal governments?

- The University of California *must* have a unified front when discussing needs with the state legislature, and to a similar extent, congress. This breaks down if campuses, divisions, programs, etc. petition for their own needs, funding, or policy changes, and it shows a lack of internal communication and collaboration within the UC System.
- **Note:** Only the Regents, who have delegated authority to President Napolitano, can determine UC's official position on legislative issues.

Do's:

- **Tell Anne Megaro when you are going to DC**
 - Required to submit federal lobbying reports
 - Help with securing meetings with members
 - Social media support
- **Tell Anne Megaro when you are going to Sacramento or communicating with state legislators/staff**
 - Providing expert testimony
 - Accepting a resolution
 - Bill/policy idea
- **Invite officials and their staff to your events, participate in officials' town hall meetings and public forums**
 - First-hand experience of your work in their district will create a lasting memory
 - Great opportunity to meet a legislator and their staff in person and build a relationship



Don'ts:

- **Do not** speak, or appear to speak, on behalf of the University (*without authorization*)
- **Do not use** UC letterhead, email, or UC title in a way that implies official UC endorsement (*without authorization*)
- **Social media accounts** – keep personal and work accounts separate
- **Do not engage in political activities**, campaigning, or ballot measures on state time and/or using state resources; (*few exceptions, e.g. hosting neutral public forums*)

Other Resources:

- [UCOP Toolkits](#)
- [APLU Best Practices](#)

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