

LAWMAKER MEETING GUIDE



PRISON
FELLOWSHIP

WELCOME!

Hello, Justice Ambassador! Thank you for your interest in conducting a lawmaker meeting.

Lawmaker meetings play a pivotal role in advancing reforms that support our Christian values and work towards justice that restores. Throughout this guide, you will find step-by-step instructions that will assist you with each stage of the process. We hope that utilizing the resources mentioned in this guide, alongside meeting with your Justice Ambassador Specialist, will allow you to walk into any lawmaker meeting feeling confident and encouraged! Thank you for your work as a Justice Ambassador!

For the lawmaker meeting, you will:

- Communicate willingness to participate, availability, and meeting preference (Zoom or in-person).
- Review your lawmaker's biography.
- Prepare to tell your story.
- Get to know the policy briefer or one-pager.
- Attend the prep call.
- Meet with your lawmaker.
- Send a thank you email to your lawmaker.
- Complete the Listening Guide.
- Debrief with your Justice.

For the lawmaker meeting, Prison Fellowship will provide:

- An invitation to you to meet with your lawmaker about an issue
- Date and time of meeting and communication with lawmaker
- Policy briefer or one-pager (background and status of the issue to discuss with your lawmaker)
- Key talking points
- Best practices and guidance for your lawmaker meeting
- A prep call to ensure your confidence
- Support throughout the process

Do not hesitate to reach out to your Justice Ambassador Specialist for support. We are here to help. Thank you again for your time and dedication to Prison Fellowship's mission of advancing justice that restores!



Sammy Perez

SAMMY PEREZ

Sr. Director, Grassroots & Reintegration

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MEETING WITH A LAWMAKER

The Goal

WHAT IS THE GOAL OF MEETING WITH A LAWMAKER?

The goal of meeting with your lawmaker is to share about important criminal justice reforms, in a winsome manner, and to ask questions, gaining information about their support for, or reservations against, the issue or bill you are discussing.

The Process

WHAT IS THE PROCESS FOR MEETING WITH A LAWMAKER?

The process for meeting with a lawmaker begins with a request from your Justice Ambassador Specialist. If you agree to a meet with a lawmaker, you'll need to share your availability and your preference for a virtual/Zoom or in-person meeting. You'll also need to plan to meet with your Justice Ambassador Specialist to complete the Prep Call. After the prep call, you'll have some time to practice for the meeting, then you'll meet with your lawmaker (or their staff). Finally, you'll complete the recommended follow-up procedures. The rest of this guide will assist you as you carry out this process.

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Prep Call

Participate
in Prep Call

Prepare for
Lawmaker
Meeting

Attend
Lawmaker
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RESPOND TO THE INVITATION

ANSWER THE REQUEST

You will receive an invitation via e-mail from your Justice Ambassador Specialist to participate in a lawmaker meeting.

The communication will include a **policy briefer** with information regarding what you need to speak about (ex: The Equal Act, Bail Reform, Medicaid Reentry, etc.), and the office you will be meeting with. In response to this invitation:

- Please reply within 24 hours of receipt of the email and indicate whether you are able or not able to participate.
- If you are available to attend:
 - Please share your availability for the 30-minute meeting. Include at least two 2-hour windows of availability. For example, January 3, 1-3 PM (EST) and January 5, 9-11 AM (EST).
 - Please include your meeting preference: virtual/Zoom or in-person.
- If you accept the invitation, the Justice Ambassador Specialist will schedule the Lawmaker Meeting and set up the Prep Call.



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PLAN FOR THE PREP CALL

After your Specialist confirms the date and time of your lawmaker meeting, your real prep time begins.

Researching and planning before your prep call with the Specialist will allow you to feel ready and at ease—know how your story intersects with the talking points, review the policy one-pager and spend some time learning about your lawmaker.

Review REVIEW POLICY BRIEFER

Familiarize yourself with the information in the policy briefener before the prep call with your Specialist begins.

- Bill Name & Number
- Policy Overview
- Policy Talking Points

Connect CONNECT YOUR “WHY” TO THE POLICY OR BILL

Sharing your story and the “why” behind supporting criminal justice reform can make a lasting impact on the hearts and minds of your lawmakers.

Think about how your why intersects with what you are asking the lawmaker to consider. Bringing **your why** and

Your Why + Policy Talking Points + The Ask



Your Why

- Share about your personal connection to prison and criminal justice reform. Explain what motivates you and why you care.
- Do you have a personal connection—maybe you were incarcerated?
- Was/is a family member incarcerated?
- Are you moved by your Christian values to take a stand for justice that restores?
- Explain your passion for justice reform!

The Ask Clearly and concisely ask the policymaker to support or oppose the bill you are discussing.

Lawmaker Meeting Talking Points

- Review the policy briefer you received from your Justice Ambassador Specialist (for example: The Equal Act, Bail Reform, Medicaid Reentry, etc.) and make note of the key point you would like to make the focus during your meeting.
- Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse. At times you may be tempted to wing it. However, rehearsing your talking points will help you to formulate your thoughts and cause you to feel much more at ease during your meeting. If you are at ease, whomever you're meeting with will be, too.

Note: Be sure to write down any questions you have for your Justice Ambassador Specialist. A firm understanding of the bill or proposed policy itself can boost confidence going into the lawmaker meeting. Don't be afraid to ask questions if you are unsure.

Know

KNOW WHO YOU'RE MEETING WITH

The Lawmaker

If you are meeting with the lawmaker him/herself, how exciting! Use what you have learned from your research to prepare for how they are likely to respond. Keep these items in mind as you prepare for a meeting:

- You must be ready to give the name and number of the bill at any point in the meeting.



- Remember that elected officials are not experts on all issues. Your input may help them with a decision, especially if you have first-hand knowledge about an issue.
- Review the lawmaker's voting record on similar legislation to prepare yourself for how they are likely to respond.
- Identify points where they might say no, so you and your Specialists can plan to address their concerns.
- Visit their website to find things in common, like personal interests and passions: All elected officials have one or more policy issues that they care about deeply. Identifying those interests may help you frame your message.
- A common concern for elected official's office is, "How does this impact my constituents?" Use this lens to help make your appeal.

The Lawmaker's Staff

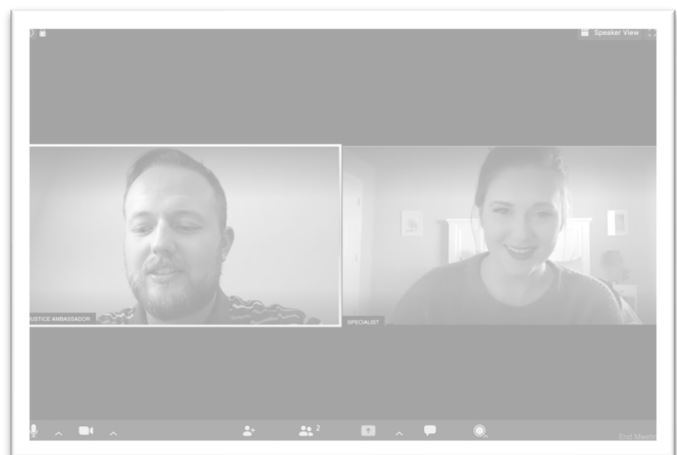
You may be scheduled to meet with someone on the lawmaker's staff rather than the lawmaker.

Meeting with a staffer is just as important and impactful as meeting with the lawmakers. Staffers oftentimes play a role in shaping and influencing what the lawmaker ends up supporting. Therefore, although you are not meeting with the lawmaker him/herself, we cannot stress enough how it is still just as important and meaningful!



PARTICIPATE IN THE PREP CALL

Meet with your specialist for the prep call. Coming to this meeting prepared with notes about your why and policy questions will allow you to be a participant, rather a recipient of information.



Have
HAVE ALL YOUR PREP DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE when the prep call with your specialist begins.

- Policy briefer
- Your notes and questions

Be ready
BE READY TO RUN THROUGH the Lawmaker Meeting Agenda. This agenda will be the focus of your prep call with your Specialist:

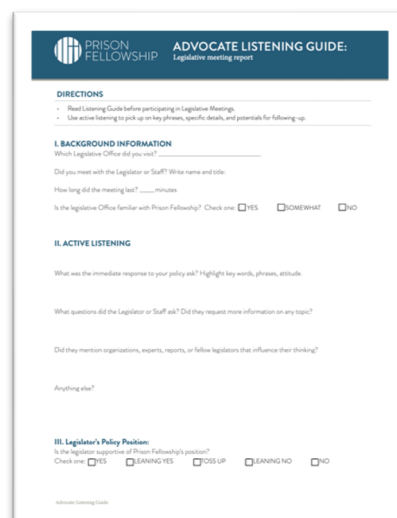
- Plan introductions between you and the lawmaker or staffer.
- Identify the problem and solution (explain the issue you are there to speak about, **including bill name and number**).
- Be ready to make the case: Explain why the reform matters, including stories, values, and statistics.
- Plan to discuss your “Why”: Why are you a Justice Ambassador? Why do you advocate for justice that restores (include how your story intersects with the ask/why you care about the legislation)?
- Prepare some questions to ask your lawmaker.
 - Review their voting record and learn what you can about them, personally.
 - Review the **Listening Guide** to see questions you should ask during your meeting.
 - During the prep call, your Specialist will share any additional, specific questions you should ask during your meeting.
- Prepare the “Ask”: Making the ask is one of the most important aspects of the meeting. The lawmaker/staffer will note the ask, and it often drives the conversation when you begin to ask questions. Your specialist will be sure that you have a good understanding of what the ask is.
- Remember, you’ll say, thank you: Always thank the lawmaker or staffer for their time.

Plan
PLAN YOUR FOLLOW UP after the lawmaker meeting.

Obtaining feedback from your meeting with the lawmaker is a key step in the Advocacy process. Information about your meeting, including the office’s stance on the issue, questions they asked, any needed follow-up, and influencers into their decision making, are vital to our team’s future strategy with the office. Your feedback can play a key role in shaping our policy campaigns!

Immediately following the lawmaker meeting:

- You are encouraged to send a **personal email of thanks** (template in Sample Thank You Email document) to the staffer/lawmaker for their time and expressing your hope that the member will support the legislation you discussed.
- Plan to follow up with your Specialist to share about your experience and the outcome of the meeting. There are two ways to share feedback with our team:
 - Fill out the **Listening Guide** form noting key information from your meeting and email it to you Specialist
 - Do a short follow up phone call with your Specialist to share about the meeting



Remember, hearing your feedback will help our team follow up appropriately with the office and can help inform our overall campaign.



PREPARE FOR THE LAWMAKER MEETING

Practice PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

- Rehearse sharing your why and how it connects to the legislation
- Review/Refresh on meeting information, especially:
 - the details about the bill (name, number, talking points)
 - the talking points
 - the Ask

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Virtual VIRTUAL MEETINGS

- Review any necessary prep materials such as:
 - The policy briefer (contains the name of the bill, the bill number, and the ask); plan to share this document with the lawmaker
 - The best practices discussed in this guide (be on time, dress professionally, etc.)
- Remember: plan to test audio and video early, then open the meeting at least 5 minutes before the scheduled call time.

In-Person IN-PERSON MEETINGS

- For in-person meetings, gather any necessary credentials or paperwork (visitor passes or directions to the meeting, room number, phone number)
- Review any necessary prep materials such as:
 - The policy briefer (contains the name of the bill, the bill number, and the ask); plan to share this document with the lawmaker
 - The best practices discussed in this guide (be on time, dress professionally, etc.)
- Remember: if you are attending in-person, plan to be early and to factor in travel time, parking, etc.



HAVE FUN! TAKE A PICTURE!

If you feel comfortable, ask the individual you are meeting with if you could take a picture and if they are okay with your sharing this photo with Prison Fellowship and on social media. We love sharing about the work of our Justice Ambassadors on social media platforms!

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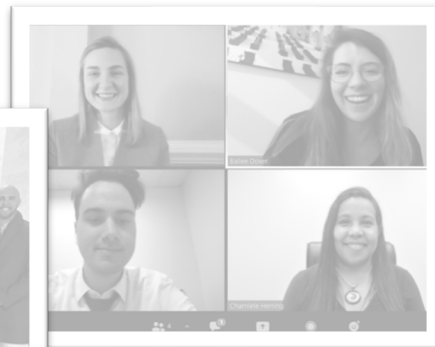
FOLLOW UP AFTER THE MEETING

WITH THE LAWMAKER AND HIS/HER OFFICE:

- Send a thank you email or handwritten note to the lawmaker/staffer. The email template is in the Sample Email Thank You document. Fostering a personal relationship with the person you've met with will be key as you will likely meet with them in the future. A personal connection can facilitate speedy responses from offices in the future.

WITH YOUR JUSTICE AMBASSADOR SPECIALIST:

- Contact your Specialist to share the meeting is finished
- Complete the Listening Guide, noting key information from your meeting (written), like:
 - Key takeaways from the meeting
 - Feedback from the office
- Do a short follow-up call with your Specialist to share about the meeting (verbal).
- Optional (but helpful), in the follow-up with the Specialist, share other aspects of your experience:
 - Give feedback on how the process went for you including how you felt going into the meeting, how your prep call prepared you for the meeting, etc.
 - Any further support, or resources that could have been helpful to you



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

SAMPLE LAWMAKER DISCUSSION

All meetings with lawmakers vary depending on several factors. You can rely on the preparation that you completed with your Specialist. Relax and be yourself! Reach out to your Specialist if you would like to see or read about a Sample Lawmaker Discussion (video or document).

WHAT IS PRISON FELLOWSHIP?

Prison Fellowship® is the nation's largest Christian nonprofit equipping the Church to serve currently and formerly incarcerated people and their families.

THE GOSPEL CONNECTION

Working to change culture and law has an immense impact on people's lives. This impact may not be seen immediately or even this side of Heaven, but God is honored when His children stand up and follow in His footsteps to love others and seek justice. Even things that seem small, like having everyday conversations, meeting with lawmakers, and sharing on social media have eternal impact and value because these activities demonstrate God's care for each person and His heart for restoration for all. Each activity you partake in as a Justice Ambassador ripples throughout the lives of people, their communities and nation, resulting in both an earthly and heavenly impact.



FAQS

Q. WHAT IF I DO NOT KNOW MUCH ABOUT POLICY OR POLITICS? AM I STILL ABLE TO GO ON A MEETING WITH MY ELECTED OFFICIALS?

Absolutely! As a matter of fact, most people are not experts on policy or politics. The elected officials in your area are there to serve you, listen to your story, and make policy changes that best suit the people. Without your voice and your story, lawmakers may not know where to turn. Your Justice Ambassador Specialist is there to answer any questions regarding the issue you are discussing, or the political process. There are no silly questions.

Q. WHAT IF MY LAWMAKER DOES NOT SUPPORT OR IS OPPOSED TO JUSTICE REFORM?

If your lawmaker opposes criminal justice reform, then this is reason even more to meet with them. You have the potential to change their heart and mind with your story! Also, If you are receiving push back from the elected official you are meeting with, that is okay. That is great information for the policy team at Prison Fellowship to have, so we can continue to gently persuade that office. Stay calm, stay confident, and stick to your talking points.

Q WHAT IS THE DRESS CODE FOR A MEETING WITH A LAWMAKER?

We encourage you to dress in business casual attire for the meeting. While meetings are causal in nature, you will want to set a tone of professionalism by dressing in typical business attire. This will communicate to the lawmaker or staff that you are well prepared.

Q. WHAT DO I NEED TO BRING TO THE MEETING?

The Policy Briefer can be a helpful resource to bring to your meetings with elected officials. These documents are okay to print and share with offices, as they often provide lawmakers with more details about the issue you spoke on. Besides that, you can bring your Listening Guide, if it is helpful.

Q. DO I ALWAYS NEED TO TELL MY JUSTICE AMBASSADOR SPECIALIST PRIOR TO MEETING WITH A LAWMAKER?

YES! This is extremely important. All requests to meet with an elected official on behalf of Prison Fellowship will first come from your Justice Ambassador Specialist. Therefore, if at any time you are meeting with an office and mentioning your tie to Prison Fellowship, you must get approval from your specialist. This is due to Prison Fellowship being a non-profit organization- and ensuring we stay within our lobbying compliance standards.

Q. WHEN SHOULD I CONTACT MY JUSTICE AMBASSADOR SPECIALIST AFTER THE MEETING?

As soon as you can! It is best practice to complete the Listening Guide right after the meeting. That way, when you also debrief with your Justice Ambassador Specialist on a call, your thoughts are already organized. Completing both the Listening Guide and debrief call with your Justice Ambassador Specialist soon after the meeting also helps with remembering as much information as possible from your conversation! If you can connect with your Justice Ambassador Specialist within 24 hours of your meeting, that would be ideal.

MORE QUESTIONS?

Reach out to your Justice Ambassador Specialist.

