



Meeting Your Legislator

An operator's guide for interim meetings with candidates and incumbent legislators

NOW IS THE PERFECT TIME

The “interim” is the stretch of time between legislative sessions. Bills are not being introduced, there are no committee hearings, and nothing is being voted on. That makes the interim the lowest-pressure—and often the best—time to start a conversation with the individuals who will represent you at the Capitol.

You do not need to know bill numbers or legislative talking points. You run a business in their district. That already makes you exactly the kind of person candidates and legislators want to hear from.

The goal of the meeting is simple: help them understand what hospitality means in their district and begin building a line of communication.

Hospitality businesses create jobs, generate tax revenue, attract visitors, and provide the gathering places where families celebrate, neighbors connect, and communities come together. Your meeting is a chance to put a human face on those contributions and help your future legislator understand what the hospitality industry means to the people they represent.

THREE THINGS TO REMEMBER

- **You are the expert.** Nobody knows your business better than you do. They cannot trip you up on what it is like to run your place.
- **You cannot get it wrong.** There is no script to memorize. “I don’t know, but I can find out” is a good answer—not a failure.
- **You are starting a conversation.** The goal is not to win a debate. The goal is to put a face, a handshake, and a real local business behind the words hospitality industry.

THREE THINGS TO DO

- **Be hospitable.** Meet them at the door. A handshake and “Thanks for coming—let me show you around” is all the opening you need. Walk them through your business just as you would a guest. Tell them how long you’ve been there, how many people you employ, what a busy day looks like, and the role your business plays in the community. Most candidates and legislators are naturally curious and genuinely want to understand what is happening in the communities they hope to represent—or already do.
- **Show the local impact.** Help them see that hospitality is not an abstract industry. It is local jobs, local tax revenue, career opportunities, gathering places, tourism, and quality of life. The more concrete you can be, the better. “We employ 32 people.” “We host graduation parties, fundraisers, and team dinners.” “Visitors stop here before they head to the lake, the game, or the theater.” These stories stick.
- **Mention what is hard.** When it comes up naturally, explain what makes running your business difficult today. You do not have to cite a bill or propose a legislative solution. “Here’s what keeps me up at night” is enough. Cost pressures, staffing, taxes, fees, insurance, regulations, and uncertainty are all part of your story.

SAY WHAT WOULD HELP

If they ask what they can do, keep it simple.

“Mostly, I want you to understand what hospitality operators are dealing with before the next session starts. When hospitality issues come up, I hope you’ll reach out to people like me who deal with these challenges every day.”

An answer like this accomplishes two things: it informs them about the industry and establishes you as a trusted local resource they can call when hospitality issues arise.

PUTTING A NUMBER ON IT

If you are ready to go one step further, bring one real number from your own business. A real number from a real business in their district carries more weight than any talking point. Put a dollar figure on a challenge, explain where the cost comes from, and then explain what would help. For example:

“Swipe fees cost me about \$XX each year—and I’m paying those fees on the sales tax I collect for the state and on the tips that belong to my employees. That money was never mine. All I’m asking is that swipe fees no longer apply to taxes and tips.”

Other examples:

- “Paid leave compliance will cost us about \$XX each year in additional payroll and administrative expenses.”
- “Our insurance costs have increased by \$XX over the last two years.”
- “Our property taxes increased by \$XX this year, and that cost has to come from somewhere.”

The number does not have to be dramatic. It simply has to be real.

SHARE THE HOSPITALITY IMPACT FACT SHEET

Hospitality Minnesota will provide a one-page Hospitality Impact fact sheet for your district. You do not have to memorize it. When the conversation turns to industry issues, put it in their hands and walk through it together. A simple transition works well:

“Here’s what hospitality looks like in this district. These are the businesses, jobs, tax revenues, and economic contributions our industry makes locally. And these are the few issues we’re focused on heading into the next legislative session.”

Then leave the fact sheet behind. It reinforces what they’ve just seen during the visit: hospitality is already an essential part of the district’s economy, workforce, tax base, and community life.

IF YOU GET STUCK

- If the conversation slows down, ask questions. Ask why they decided to run for office, what issues they’re hearing about while talking with constituents, or what they’re hoping to accomplish in the next session.

A USEFUL WAY TO END THE MEETING

“Can I be a local resource for you whenever hospitality issues come up?”

That question often becomes the most important part of the visit. It shifts the relationship from a one-time meeting to an ongoing conversation.

AFTER THE MEETING

Send a brief thank-you email. It can be as simple as:

“Thank you for taking the time to visit today. I appreciated the opportunity to show you our business and discuss what hospitality means in the district. Please don’t hesitate to reach out if hospitality-related issues arise. I’d be glad to serve as a local resource.”

If you have any questions, please contact us.

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