



# NATIONAL CONFERENCE *of* STATE LEGISLATURES

*The Forum for America's Ideas*

## **Ten Tips for Serving Constituents**

1. **Make it a priority.** To be good at constituent casework, you need to plan, build relationships with those who can help you solve problems and establish routines to handle typical requests.
2. **Be available and accessible.** Let your constituents know when, where and how they can meet with you.
3. **Attitude is everything.** Be kind, attentive and patient when talking with constituents.
4. **Be ready.** You may be approached at anytime with a constituent request, even when you are in the middle of something else. Train yourself to adjust and handle these unexpected constituent encounters.
5. **Listen.** Sometimes people want to be heard more than anything else. Learn to listen for the facts and the underlying emotions.
6. **Keep notes.** You have to record the key points and contact information from your constituent contacts.
7. **Remember there are two sides to a story.** You are hearing one constituent's viewpoint, but you may not be getting the full picture on an issue or problem. Be empathetic, but realize you may not be hearing the whole truth.
8. **Under promise and over produce.** Never promise specific results or solutions. Your emphasis at first is getting a clear picture of the problem and what the constituent wants you to do. Be thorough and creative in looking for potential solutions.
9. **Be tactful.** You may find that the constituent is misinformed or that there is no simple solution to the problem. Be diplomatic, calm and clear when explaining things.
10. **Follow up.** Even though people tell you the problem has been resolved, follow up with the constituent to make sure.

Note: Special thanks to Texas Senator Jeff Wentworth for suggesting many of these tips.