

# Tips for Speaking to Your Legislator

When you lobby at the RI State House, you will speak to your local senator and representative to convince them of the importance of our work to end homelessness. Here are a few tips and pointers to guide you in your persuasive conversation with your legislators.

## KNOW THE BASIC FACTS

You do not have to be a policy expert – you are already an expert in your own experience and why you are concerned about this issue, and that will get you very far! Knowing some general facts about the issue you are supporting can also be helpful. Be honest and accurate. It's okay to say "I don't know." Here are some key points:

- **The Zero: 2016 has a goal to end veterans homelessness by the end of 2015 and chronic homelessness by the end of 2016**
- **More resources are needed to make the housing placements to meet this goal and to also serve families experiencing homelessness**

## PLAN YOUR OPENING COMMENT

The most important part of any discussion is getting off to a good start. If you are talking to your own legislator, be sure to introduce yourself as a constituent and a voter. Begin by saying something friendly. You do not want them to feel bombarded or as if they are about to be attacked. Be sure to smile and be polite.

## TALK AND LISTEN

Tell your stories in your own way but do not do all of the talking. Be an active listener as well. Ask the legislators questions while speaking with them about their own personal opinions and listen carefully. Share our handout to give them information about the bills we are promoting.

- **Ask directly if your legislator supports the goals of the Zero: 2016 campaign to end veterans and chronic homelessness by the end of 2016.**
- **Avoid arguing because we want the officials on our side.**
- **If you do not know something, offer to find the information – it will give you another opportunity to speak with your legislator.**
- **Wrap up the conversation by thanking the legislator for their time and attention.**

## FINISHED!

**Let us know how your conversations went!** Use the section on the right to jot down any notes from your conversation, such as thoughts you had or questions from legislators.

**For more info:** Call 401-721-5685 or email [info@rihomeless.org](mailto:info@rihomeless.org)

## Notes



rhode island coalition for the homeless

