



Ten Steps to Planning and Executing a Successful Legislative Tour of Your Agricultural Education Program

1. Get Permission:

Before you begin any planning, get permission from school officials. Keep everyone informed.

2. Determine Goals:

What type of impression do you want the legislator to have of your school? What programs do you want to highlight to the legislator? Brainstorm and select the most important features you want to show off.

3. Develop a Draft Agenda:

Most importantly, make sure school is in session for the tour. Plan a concise introductory presentation about the school and programs the legislator will see. Following the brief presentation, schedule an organized tour.

4. Invite Your Legislators:

Now that you have your agenda, the next step is to invite your legislators. Fax or mail a brief letter to the member at his or her local district office at least six weeks before the scheduled date (you can find your member's contact information by visiting NAAE's Legislative Action Center (*link <http://capwiz.com/naae/home/>*)). Briefly introduce yourself, your program, and state the purpose of the letter. Explain why you would like the Member to visit your program (to see how an example of an agricultural education program can work in the community, the importance of supporting such initiatives, etc.). Include specific information about the visit (date, time, location, others who may be invited, whether the media will be invited, what activities are planned for the visit). Legislators have very busy schedules, so you'll need to be as flexible and accommodating as possible.

5. Follow Up with the Scheduler:

Contact the legislator's scheduler seven to 10 days after you have mailed the invitation. Keep in mind that you need to be flexible with the date and arrange the legislative tour to fit the legislator's schedule. You should take every effort to accommodate the legislator. NOTE: Federal legislators are most likely to be in their home districts Mondays, Fridays, and on the weekends.

6. Determine Press Activities:

Work with the legislator's press secretary to determine appropriate press activities. Send a press release to the local media inviting them to attend the tour. In addition to giving your legislator publicity, it will increase the community's interest in your program. Be sure to follow up with the media to make sure that they attend since the legislator will be expecting them! Take plenty of photographs. If you are unable to have the media present during the tour, send the local reporters a follow-up summary and a photograph for their use.

7. Conduct the Tour:

The day has finally arrived! When the legislator and his or her staff arrive, distribute descriptions of your programs, success stories about students, your program's one-pager (*link to resource above*) and any other relevant information you feel promotes your program. Make sure that your name, address, and phone number are on every document so staff can contact you later.

Let the member know the scope of the program: how many people you serve, what impacts the program has on families, the community, local businesses, and the local economy. Explain why continued funding for career and technical education is important to students, jobseekers, and businesses in the state or district.

Encourage interaction between the member and students. It is helpful for members to make connections with those who benefit from the program and see the changes in people's lives that good agricultural education programs make.

8. Include Supporters:

Have a few supporters present, such as parents, students, and business partners to help you make the case.

9. Make Your Pitch:

Emphasize how additional resources could benefit students. While you have your legislator's undivided attention, make a pitch for support. Ask the legislator to support your programs through increased funding and effective legislation. (Remember to be specific if current legislation is pending.)

10. Follow Up:

Congratulations! You conducted a successful tour, but you have another important step to take. Before you do anything else, make sure you:

- Send thank you letters to the legislator and any staff who attended, reiterating the need for additional funding and more effective policies for your program.
- Include copies of press coverage.
- Include a photo of the legislator with your students and supporters to remind the legislator how important agricultural education is to your community.