

Establishing a Relationship with Your Legislator

You must establish a relationship with your legislator, just as you do with donors. The following are simple guidelines for developing that relationship before you call on your legislator for a specific request.

- **Schedule a meeting** with your legislator in her district.
- **Notify your statewide advocacy group** in advance.
- **Develop a one-page summary** of key points for the legislator.
- **Emphasize economic impact, educational services, and community value.**
- **Send a thank you note** and maintain contact from time to time.
- **Report to your advocacy network.**

Building a relationship with your legislator is a lot like stewardship for your donors. For example, you can invite your legislator to tour your institution, appear at an event, observe an educational workshop, or just sit down to talk. It is appropriate to address your legislator by her title: Senator Jones or Representative Smith. Through this meeting, you want her to learn how your cultural organization contributes to her district:

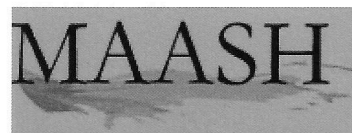
- How your organization contributes to the **local economy** (jobs, payroll, local vendors)
- How your organization supports **education and children** (school tours, after-school programs, in-school presentations, curriculum development)
- That your organization is strongly supported by the legislator's **constituents**

Prepare a one-page letter or summary of the key points that you will discuss with your legislator (see other side). This will help you organize your thoughts as well as create an information sheet specifically designed for your legislator to take with her.

Ask your legislator about her interests and background. Does she have any arts experience, is she interested in the humanities, what did she study in college, does she have school-aged children, and so on. By understanding the legislator's interest, you can focus your tour on what interests her most (just like you would with a prospective donor). Discuss ways the legislator can help in public appearances—can she speak at a board meeting; present awards at a show; draft a letter for an exhibition booklet or playbill? Think of ways you can make your legislator look good.

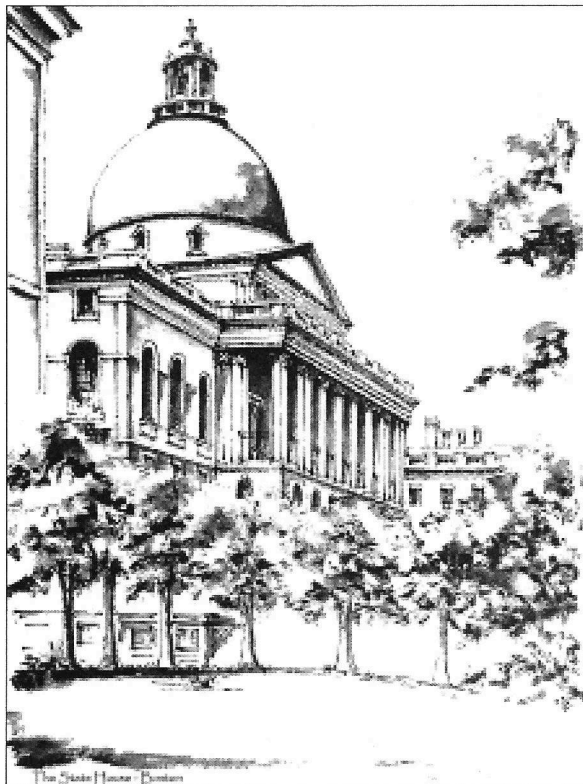
After the visit, send the legislator a thank you note. Then, stay in touch. Put your legislator on your mailing list. Call her when there is an opportunity to appear before the public or any gathering with a significant number of voters. Keep her informed of developments and long-range plans. You are cultivating an ally for mutual benefit. So, in addition to outlining your goals, you should work to understand the legislator's goals—building a better community and getting re-elected.

~ Over ~



The following are key points to address with your legislator:

1. The mission of your organization, including what audiences you serve.
2. Number of employees, and the size of your payroll.
3. Number of visitors/audience members per year and where they come from—international, out-of-state, in-state, and local visitors.
4. How long the organization has existed.
5. Plans for the future, such as physical expansion, remodeling, new programming, capital campaigns, and so on.
6. Local economic impact. If you do not have economic impact information, discuss it anecdotally. For example, your organization has an impact on nearby restaurants and hotels.
7. Educational programs. Make note of how your organization serves education through after-school programs, school visits, curriculum assistance, teacher training, life-long learning, and more.
8. The role of state cultural funding for your organization, including how much money your organization received, how it is used, what you lost when the funding was cut, how the funding helps raise additional money. Talk about the importance of state funding for the arts, sciences, and humanities.
9. Be sure to mention that you are a member of your statewide cultural advocacy group.
10. Nonprofit business. Describe how your business works—how much of your operating budget comes from earned income, endowment, and grants and how much money has to be raised each year.



The State House, Boston, MA
www.kellscraft.com

Visit **www.maash.org** for more information.