MEETING WITH YOUR ELECTED REPRESENTATIVE

It is important to remember that our elected officials work for us. We are meeting with them to ask them to do their job. When you are meeting to ask that they vote a certain way you have every right to do so. That is your job as an engaged citizen and their constituent.

Know what power you have going into the meeting. How long has the rep been in office? Did they win by a large or small margin in the last election? If one party always wins in your district look at the primary election. Was there a challenger? How much did the rep win by?

Always start out by being polite. It is not rude to be direct, make specific “asks” or demands, and expect an answer. Often while seeming to sound supportive and “nice” the elected officials are not giving you an answer. If you hear things like “I support all you are doing” - “I’m so glad to meet you and get your input” - “This is very helpful information, thank you so much for coming, I’ll consider it” – these are not answers to the question “Will you vote to fully fund the IBCCP (IL Breast and Cervical Cancer Program), either you have not asked a direct question or they have chosen not to answer it. In either case...STOP ... repeat the question and demand that they answer your specific question.

Don’t be put off by “There is no money”. Where there is the political will there is the money.

Some Tips for Setting up and During the Meeting:

1. Call, write, email to get a meeting with your elected official... not staff. If you are having trouble getting a meeting have additional members of your team call. If the legislature is in session when you are in Springfield stand outside the chamber and send in a note asking your representative to come out and meet with you. There will be lots of other people standing in the rotunda doing the same thing. Don’t be shy... move to the front of the group and give your note/card to one of the clerks who will deliver it to your rep on the House/Senate floor. If you have your Rep’s cell# text him/her and tell and ask that they come out to meet you.

2. To prepare for the meeting develop your team. Ideally team members should live in the elected official’s district... be constituents.

3. Let the local press know that you are going to meet with your State Reps and are happy to be interviewed before and after the meeting. Tell them that there is a bus load of folks leaving from a specific location and it would make a good photo op; offer them the opportunity to interview community members going off to Springfield to meet with their representatives.

4. Pick one person to be the team leader/spokesperson – this person will:
   - Thank the elected official for the meeting
   - Ask other team members to introduce themselves – stating their name, member of the Task Force and other organizations they belong to in the community, and that they are registered to vote. (This displays your power)
• Explain why we are here.
• Ask specific members of the team to give short personal stories about how the issue affects them and others like them in the district.
• Ask the elected official to take some explicit action – (i.e. fully fund the IBCCP)
• Stop – wait for the answer. If not getting a direct answer, interrupt and ask that the representative PLEASE answer the question.
• Have a backup team member. Sometimes people get nervous and forget to ask the direct question. If this happens a designated team member should speak up and say: “...and so we are asking that you vote for.....”

5. Assign one team member to take notes of what is being said. Listen and make sure you are hearing what the rep is saying, write it down.

6. Assign another team member to video the meeting (can be on your cell phone) the meeting. If the rep objects, push back but don’t let this be the issue. Say something like “we have lots of folks who could not be here today and we wanted to show them your response firsthand.” If they continue to object, drop it and go on with the meeting making sure to get good notes. If you are not getting a YES to your question, say: “obviously you do not understand how important this is to your constituents, will you come to a meeting in the district in the next week to hear how deeply they feel about this issue and how it affects them and their families. Don’t ask this too quickly. Push for the YES.

7. If you get a flat out “NO” to your request for full funding and an indistrict meeting express your shock and dismay and let them know that you are going back to meet with the local media, will be posting the results of this meeting on social media, and letting other constituents know that their representative is voting to cut this life-saving funding. Encourage all to call their state rep and ask that they vote for full funding of the IBCCP.

8. If you get a “YES” to full funding respond enthusiastically and ask for a picture with the rep. Say that you will be posting it on your website to let your members know how they are voting.

9. If you get an “UNDECIDED” on the funding but a YES for an indistrict meeting, pin down the date and time of the meeting, ask for the name of the staff person to follow-up with, send a confirmation memo to the representative and copy the staff person, and go back and recruit lots more folks to be at the community meeting.

**Follow-up**

1. Do a quick debriefing right after the meeting so that you are all on the same page. Assign someone to give the report when you get back to the larger group and/or on the bus ride home.
2. Make clear next steps. If your rep said, “YES” they will vote for your bill send a memo thanking them restating what was agreed to.
3. If the rep is still undecided and willing to come to an in district meeting move quickly; have a meeting space lined up beforehand so you can start making turnout calls immediately. Let the local media know that you are having this meeting.