

How to Host a Legislator Visit at your House of Worship

Overview

Hosting legislators at your House of Worship gives them the chance to see how a congregation in their district is involved in the stewardship of the environment, energy efficiency, renewable energy, or other sustainable ministries. It shares with them how your congregation is concerned about and engaged in a moral obligation to future generations to leave them a planet that is not polluted or damaged by climate change. It also gives you the opportunity to become a "go-to" resource for policy makers when it comes to issues related to the stewardship of the environment.

Here are some suggestions for a successful Legislator Visit:

- **Plan.** Submit your invitation (preferably via email) as far in advance as possible. Be ready to follow up by phone to talk with a staff member who handles the legislator's schedule. Work with the scheduler to find a date that works well for the legislator and your congregation. If the date you suggest doesn't work, offer several dates/times as options. Ask if the legislator will be accompanied by staff and, if so, get their names and titles.
- **Work with Ohio Interfaith Power and Light.** Consider Ohio Interfaith Power and Light your partner in hosting a successful visit. We can provide background information on whether a legislator has been supportive of environmental issues in the past and assistance in providing resources.
- **Prepare Your Congregation.** It's important that your congregation is aware of the scheduled visit. Here are some ways to include members of your congregation in the visit:
 - Green Team members can share information about their ministry and why they are involved
 - Staff can share energy efficiency information and facilitate a tour of the house of worship to show projects, including gardens.
 - Clergy can share how they include creation care in worship and education
 - Education classes and children can share creation care artwork or projects
- **Perform a walk-through with your congregation's participants before the visit**
The agenda should be reviewed and the tour route mapped out so it runs smoothly and on time. (See sample Visit Agenda below)
- **Distribute Schedules to Everyone Involved in the Visit**
Once the agenda is finalized, distribute it to all participants and send a copy to the legislator's scheduler.

- **Coordinate Media Relations**

It is up to the legislator's office to determine if press should be involved. If media coverage is agreeable with the legislator, use the sample media advisory below as a start to your media relations efforts. You can also feature the visit on your congregation's website and social media pages.

During the Visit

- **Greet the Legislator and Staff Members (2-3 min.)**

Your congregation's faith leader should be on hand to greet the legislator and his/her staff when they arrive on site. Following brief introductions, the tour should promptly begin.

- **Tour House of Worship (15-20 min.):** Share how your House of Worship is saving energy, saving creation, and saving money through energy efficiency and energy conservation or local gardening. Relate your energy stewardship with care for creation and a moral obligation to future generations.

- **Meet with Green Team/Education Class/Special Project members (30-35 min.)**

Provide an opportunity for members of your congregation to share how they are involved in environmental stewardship and why it is important to them. Invite the legislator to make a few remarks and answer any questions your members may have.

After the Visit

- **Send a thank you letter.**

- **Report back to Ohio Interfaith Power and Light:** If an Ohio IPL staff person was unable to participate in your visit, let us know how it went.

- **Post pictures of the visit on social media.** Send a follow-up press release to local media with pictures of the visit.

SAMPLES

Sample Invitation:

[Insert Name]
[Insert House of Worship]
[Insert street Address]
[Insert City, State, Zip]
[Insert Date]

The Honorable (insert name)
Dear [Insert Name]:

I would like to extend an invitation to you to visit [House of Worship]. [House of Worship] is a congregation in your district with XX members and we would like to share with you how we are saving energy (...involved in environmental stewardship/addressing climate change, etc.)

During the visit, you will have the opportunity to tour our house of worship facility, meet with our members and learn what issues matter to them. *I am confident that by seeing our congregation's ministry in environmental stewardship, you will understand the important role you can play in helping us care for creation and future generations.*

I hope that you will be able to accept our invitation to participate. I will call your office regarding the details of this event. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

[Insert Your Name]
[Insert Your Position]
[Insert Your House of Worship's Name]

MEDIA ADVISORY

- A media advisory alerts reporters and editors to your event by providing them with the five Ws—what, why, who, when and where.
- Send the advisory to reporters and editors you think would be interested in the activity. Then, after you send the day-of-the-event advisory, call and let the newsrooms know you are following up on the advisory. Answer any questions they may have.

- Put a contact name and daytime phone number at the top of the advisory. Also include the following two address lines, which should be boldfaced and underlined.
- **ATTENTION: NEWS/ASSIGNMENT/PHOTO EDITORS MEDIA ADVISORY FOR (DAY AND DATE OF EVENT.)**

SAMPLE MEDIA ADVISORY

FOR MORE INFORMATION
(Contact name & Phone number)

ATTN: NEWS/ASSIGNMENT/PHOTO EDITORS MEDIA ADVISORY FOR (date)

Representative [NAME] to tour [House of Worship]

WHAT: [NAME] (R/D; District) will tour [House of Worship] on [DATE]. During the visit, congressperson [NAME] will meet with members of the congregation to discuss issues about the environment and how members of the congregation are concerned about and engaged in a moral obligation to future generations to leave them a planet that is not polluted or damaged.

WHO: (List the names of participants.)

WHEN: (Date) (Time)

WHERE: (Location)

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