

WHAT DO I SAY AT A MEETING WITH MY FEDERAL LAWMAKERS?

Congratulations! You have scheduled a meeting with your U.S. Representative or U.S. Senator. Now what should you say when you meet with them?

Remember, you will probably only have about 20-30 minutes to meet with your lawmaker or his/her staff member. Be respectful of their time and make your points briefly.

Here are some things to share and to ask:

1. **Share** your name and where you live.
2. **Share** why you care about mandatory minimum sentencing:
 - **If you have a loved one in prison**: Share your loved one's story in two minutes or less. Explain briefly the hardships your family has suffered because of the lengthy punishment. Show the lawmaker a picture of your family member in prison. For example, "My son is serving a 10-year mandatory minimum prison sentence because he sold drugs. Not having him at home and able to contribute has put a huge financial and emotional strain on his wife and three kids. I'm not asking you to help him, but these lengthy sentences are a big burden on me and thousands of other people just like me."
 - **If you do not have a loved one in prison**: Explain your concerns with our present sentencing system. For example, "Mandatory minimum sentences require judges to send thousands of nonviolent offenders to prison for decades, leading to high prison costs for taxpayers and less funding for law enforcement."
3. **Ask** for your lawmaker's view on mandatory minimum sentences. For example, "Do you see any problems with mandatory minimum laws?" Listen carefully to the answer, and don't interrupt. Ask clarifying questions, if necessary.
4. **Ask** your lawmaker to support or cosponsor sentencing reform bills. For example, "I'm asking you to cosponsor the Justice Safety Valve Act because it will produce better justice and save taxpayers money."

A few other pointers to keep in mind:

1. **Thank** your lawmaker, even if you disagree. For example, "I see that we disagree on this point, but I appreciate your willingness to consider my views. Thank you for meeting with me." Never threaten by saying things like "I'll never vote for you" or "I pay your salary."
2. **Stay focused** on legislation. Don't ask or expect your lawmaker to help in a particular case or legal matter. Focus on one or two issues or bills that you care about.
3. **Leave** your lawmaker with information. Leave behind a copy of the bill you want the lawmaker to support or a factsheet about the bill. If the lawmaker wants more information, tell them you'll provide it, and then contact FAMM for more help.

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