



# NOA Key Contact FIRST AID KIT

*A guide for key contacts on developing relationships with legislators.*

*Like it or not, our political system is constructed in such a way that it requires a candidate have large amounts of capital on hand to get their message out in order to be elected and re-elected.*

*It is essential to a legislated profession, such as optometry, to have good relations with the legislators who determine the profession's future.*

*The best way to accomplish this is to help candidates when they are running for office.*

*Financial support is **ALWAYS** good in a political race, but what is most important is to donate additional time and effort to help your candidate be successful.*

*The NOA Key Contact First Aid Kit is designed to help guide you through the process of meeting and interacting with candidates and elected lawmakers.*

## **THE MISSION**

To educate the candidate or legislator on the issues that are important to your practice and patients. And to develop and maintain a personal relationship such that the candidate or legislator trusts and values your opinion on those issues.



## WHAT TO DO



- Meet and greet, introduce yourself. This can be as formal or informal as you and the candidate/legislator agree upon. Invite and include other NOA members when possible. This may help make initial meetings easier.
- It is proper to host or invite the candidate to your home or office.
- A breakfast, lunch or dinner meeting is a great opportunity to interact with the candidate.
- It is satisfactory to meet a candidate at an organizational event but it is preferable to later have one-on-one contact to initiate a good relationship and educate the candidate on your concerns.
- Phone conversations, texting and email are all good forms of communication, but they do not take the place of personal interaction.
- Any non-verbal communication, specifically writing on important legislative issues, should be done with a handwritten note whenever possible. The use of form letters is discouraged. A handwritten note shows more time was taken to deliver the message and conveys the important and sensitive nature of the information contained within.
- The only time that one would not write a personal note is when the message is very time sensitive and mailing delays could jeopardize successful communication.

## WHAT NOT TO DO

- Do not ever show up late to a scheduled meeting.
- Do not reschedule multiple times due to your own scheduling conflicts. If the candidate/legislator has scheduling conflicts then this is understandable.
- Never promise anything to the candidate that you cannot deliver.

- **NEVER** ask specifically for a legislator to vote for legislation that you support or against legislation that you are against in return for your support, be it either financial or labor specific.
- Do not threaten or suggest consequences if the legislator or candidate does not agree with your position.
- Never misrepresent facts or guess at answers to questions. If you don't know the answer or aren't sure of the facts, get them later and follow up promptly with the candidate/legislator.

## WHAT TO SAY

- Interact in normal conversation, introduce yourself and your family and get to know the candidate/legislator.
- Inquire about the candidate's knowledge of your profession, i.e. Has the candidate ever had an eye exam?
- Educate and communicate what an optometrist can and cannot do within the confines of current state law.
- Have reference materials on issues on hand—and make yourself knowledgeable on those reference materials, so that you can (in general terms) pass on that information to the candidate. At some point, you will want to tell him/her details of specific legislation. This information can wait until an appropriate time, once you have gotten to know your candidate better. In these situations one needs to play it by ear, and not overwhelm the candidate in the first meeting. You can educate the candidate briefly as to the history of the profession and where we see the profession going forth in the future.
- What a key contact person should say is that, “My organization and I would greatly appreciate your support.” Same message, but a totally different approach. You can also stress how important this issue is to you and your patients.





## HOW TO SAY IT

- After a personal conversation and formalities are concluded and you reach your specific message about the legislation during your conversation then the key contact person needs to be specific and timely with that information.
- Speak to the candidate/legislator as if he or she was a patient you were educating on your legislation and put the legislation in terms that are readily understandable.
- Do not get off message once you have started speaking about the legislation and start discussing other topics of the day or other topics that are important to you at that time.
- If your candidate asks questions and you don't know the answer, then answer honestly that you are not sure, but that you can get the answer to that question and get back to them.
- Make sure that the candidate always knows that they can call you at any time for information on your profession or anything related to the profession of optometry and eye care.

## WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

- Volunteer for handing out campaign literature, putting up yard signs.
- Volunteer to host a fundraiser. NOA can help with the details.
- Volunteer to stuff envelopes/mailings.
- Volunteer to work the phone banks, to call and get out the vote for your candidate.

*All of these actions speak volumes more than a donation to the candidate's campaign. It is wonderful to give a financial donation to your candidate but volunteering your time in addition to financial support will distinguish you from other donors and establish you as a valued resource.*

