

How to Get an Elected Official to Attend Your Event

Whether you're inviting the president of the United States or your local mayor, you can enhance your event by following the guidelines below. And always remember, when dealing with politicians:

Be Persistent. Be Polite. Be Patient.

Plan as far in advance as possible

- Politicians' schedules fill up rapidly. Create a list of your top three choices and get the invitation out to your first choice as soon as possible. This will put you on his/her radar and, in case your first choice declines, gives you enough time to invite others.
- For federal (and some staff) officials, contact their local office. This shows that you are respectful of their time and will almost always get you a response.
- If relevant, describe the benefits of having the official attend your event (e.g., ability to talk about an issue that is important to him/her or the chance to meet with a significant number of voters in the district).

Prepare for the event

- Work in coordination with the official's staff so that everyone has the same expectations. Be clear about what you hope the official will do (e.g., present an award or introduce a part of the program). Try to make it as easy for him/her as you can.
- Provide staff with a complete agenda and alert them to any media you think will attend. Give them a full list of the media you expect to attend as you get closer to the date.
- If you present an award to the official (always a good idea), alert his/her staff in advance and ask that the official say a few words of thanks.

During and after the event

- Have a photographer record your event. Display the photos in your newsletter or other IIA communications and send copies to the official and his/her staff as well as The IIA Advocacy Department (Advocacy@theiia.org).
- Following the event, thank the official with a note or card, photos, feedback, stories, and anything you would like to share.
- Follow up in a timely manner regarding any questions he/she may have asked you during the event that you were unable to answer. This allows you to continue your connection with the official after the event.
- Finally, don't be surprised or offended if a staff member shows up for the official at the last minute. Politicians are very busy and often are pulled in multiple directions.

If you are successful in having a lawmaker at your event, please provide a report to The IIA's Advocacy Department at Advocacy@theiia.org to help us track our advocacy efforts.