

November 13, 2009

Attending Town Meetings

The Humane Society of the United States

A large and well-informed turnout at a town hall meeting or a community forum is an extremely effective way to send a strong message to your congressperson, the media, and the general public (via the media). If your lawmaker is supportive of your issue, a show of support helps to solidify his or her position.

Sometimes lawmakers participate in events not open to the public, except by invitation. If you know of an event that you would like to attend, but it is not open to the public, call the legislator's office and ask if you can attend. In general, when attending and speaking at town meetings, conduct yourself as you would when testifying at a hearing or meeting with your elected officials.

Before the town meeting...

- Find out the legislator's schedule. Newspapers often publish these dates, or sometimes the lawmaker will send out a schedule to voters in his or her district. The most reliable way to find the schedule is to call his or her office.
- Try to recruit several others to attend the meeting with you. Inform them of the date, time, address and nature of the meeting. If you have the time and resources, provide background information, a map to the site, salient points and sample questions.
- Think about how the congressperson will likely respond to your questions, and prepare in advance with answers and follow-up questions.

At the town meeting...

- Keep your comments brief, clear and to the point.
- If you attend with a group, wear stickers or buttons to identify that you are all in support of a common issue.