# Tips for Effective 2A Grassroots Advocacy

## In General

1. If you do not know who your Delegate(s) and Senator are find out by visiting mdelect.net.
2. Make a point of meeting your Delegate(s) and Senator as soon as possible.
3. Read their biographies on the Maryland General Assembly website before you contact them, it will give you some insight on their positions and interests.
4. If you cannot meet in person, communicate with them via phone and email.
5. Personal "business cards" are a great communication tool. If you don't already have a "business" type card, you can:
    a. Buy some business card stock (you can download Word compatible templates at https://www.avery.com/templates/category/business-cards), create and print your own. Or,
    b. Design and order cards online, e.g.: https://www.vistaprint.com/business-cards
6. Cards don't have to be fancy, all you need is your name, address, phone number and email. Staffers like it when they don't have to write down the information.
7. Make a point of learning who is their Chief of Staff (COS)and establish a good relationship with the COS as they are the gatekeeper. A positive rapport with the COS will get you a meeting or at least phone time far more easily when they know you, or at least know your name.
8. NEVER get personal when interacting with a legislator or any member of the legislator's staff. Stick to facts, sound public policy and procedures.
9. If you don't know the answer to a question, whether in person one on one with a legislator or in Committee, simply say you don't know, but will endeavor to get the answer. Make a point of writing down the question and getting the answer as quickly as possible. Set a date you will respond by. Don't been reluctant to consult others who have genuine expertise on the topic. You are not expected to be an expert (the legislators aren't either).

10. Know the bill you are advocating for or against. Bills often reference other statute sections, the text of which are not always included in the language of the Bill. For information on all of Maryland's gun laws, download:

    2A Maryland's 2025 Edition of Maryland Gun Laws

11. When available, download the fiscal note on the bill. Politicians are sensitive to the cost of implementing legislation and it can often help you justify your position.
12. Be prepared to provide valid facts to show how the proposed legislation will impact you personally.
13. Sending emails with "canned pre-written" messages is not effective. They connote a writer who did not personally invest time or thought and is unlikely to take further action. Use your own words, be short and to the point. During Session, Legislators get hundreds of emails; unless you are a known resource for the legislator, chances are your email will simply be logged as for or against a given bill.
14. Avoid sending emails dealing with multiple bills in a single email, they are not as effective as a dedicated personal email to each legislator for each bill.
15. Avoid sending emails with multiple addressees on the same email. Instead send a single email to each of the legislators. Consider investing in one of the various plug-ins which will do a mail merge of an original email to send individualized emails to all those you wish to contact. Combining Microsoft's Outlook email client, 2A Marland's PST download and the add-in "Send Personally" makes it easy to send dozens of personalized emails quickly.
16. You can really get noticed by sending a letter! Having a physical letter in the legislator's hand will convey that you are really serious about the topic. Yes, it is old school which is why you will stand out from the crowd.
17. When you are communicating with a legislator who is your representative, make a point of letting them know that you are one of their constituents.
18. Always include your name, address, legislative district and phone number in your emails.
19. Direct your communications to the members of the Committee which has control of the bill and to your Senator or Delegate(s). In most cases gun bills are heard in either the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee (JPR) or the House Judiciary Committee (JUD). If the bill is passed out of Committee, then you need to contact as many members of the Senator or House.

## In Annapolis and During Testimony Before a Committee

1. 2A Maryland's ***Lobbying in Annapolis*** is a comprehensive resource. It contains:
    a. Tips for 2A Advocacy
    b. Annapolis area map showing parking and government building locations.
    c. Public parking locations and shuttle route information
    d. Compiled "all on one page" list of the members of the Maryland General Assembly with room numbers and phone extensions
    e. Committee Member Information
    f. House JUD & Senate JPR Committee Witness Guidelines and FAQs
    g. Contact information for the entire Maryland General Assembly with:
        i. Room numbers
        ii. Phone numbers
        iii. Committee membership
        iv. Hyperlinked E-mail addresses
        v. Party affiliation
        vi. Floor plans with room numbers for the House and Senate Office Buildings
2. Each Committee has its own protocol regarding dates when you can register to testify, submitting written testimony and presenting testimony. Virtual presentations will be extremely limited.
    a. https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/pubs-current/current-jpr-faqs.pdf
    b. https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/pubs-current/current-jud-faqs.pdf
3. Visitors to the Maryland General Assembly are required to pass through "airport" style security. No weapons of any type are permitted, **NO** exceptions for permit holders.
4. When in Annapolis for gun bills, avoid "cammies" or attire which could be viewed as "far right," militia, or Trump related.
5. In Committee, applause is not permitted during or after testimony.
6. Depending on the Committee your testimony time will normally be limited from as little as 2 minutes up to 3 minutes. The Committee Chair has the authority to change the allotted time at will. On occasion you may be limited to as little as 1 minute or the allotted time to speak on the different bills at the same time. Their Committee, their rules.
7. When your allotted time to testify expires, thank the Chairman and Committee for their time. Never try to continue after your time expires.

8. When presenting oral testimony:
    a. Do not read your testimony.
        i. Submit your testimony online when you register to testify.
        ii. Make “bullet points” of the major issues you want to cover.
    b. Avoid using organizational boilerplate as it becomes repetitive and easy to ignore.
    c. If others have already made your point, a simple "Me, too" or "what person Y already said" gets the point across. (You may feel like you invested a large amount of time and didn’t get to say what you came to say but you will score points for yourself and our side with the Committee Chairman…)
9. Whenever possible, cite your sources and avoid using data from special interest groups. Government sources are generally best as politicians are reluctant to challenge the credibility of the data.
10. NEVER argue with the Committee Chair or Committee members. You won’t win and it reflects poorly on you personally and on us as 2A Advocates.
11. Do NOT engage the supporters for the “other side” in debate. It is a no-win scenario. You are not going to “convert” them and it often leads to awkward or even unpleasant outcomes. Be professional, courteous, and polite; even if they are not.

## Registering to Testify

In order to testify, you must first create your personal “MYMGA Account.” Video tutorials are available. You will find them linked on 2A Maryland’s home page: Or, by using these links:

How to create your “MYMGA” account:
http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/Video/Tutorials/MyMGA%20New%20Account.mp4

How to sign up as a witness and submit testimony:
http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/Video/Tutorials/Witness%20Sign%20Up.mp4

How to create your bill tracking list:
http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/Video/Tutorials/Bill%20Tracking%20Lists.mp4

Click here to create your MYMGA account:
https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Account/Register/Tracking