



## Hosting Site Visits and Events for Elected Officials

There simply is no better way to get extended face time and make a lasting impression than with a site visit or another creative event when your legislators are home in the state or district.

### What kind of event do you want to host?

- A site visit to a recently conserved property to meet a landowner of modest means who benefited from the incentive
- A press conference where you present an award for your representative's leadership in renewing the easement incentive or achieving your other land trust priorities
- A public education forum spreading the news of land conservation tools to landowners
- An existing event like your annual dinner, a volunteer day or a nature hike
- A meeting in your legislator's district office
- Hosting or helping to host a conference call (tele town hall)
- If you have trouble scheduling a meeting of your own, consider attending your legislator's town hall meeting, pancake breakfast, gathering of civic leaders, or similar event.

### How to get started?

It's important to build your event around their schedule.

1. Call up the legislator's nearest district office (check at [house.gov](http://house.gov) or [senate.gov](http://senate.gov)).
2. Build a relationship with a staff member who works on issues like agriculture or conservation, then CC them when submitting your formal request
3. Ask who handles scheduling in the district and how they prefer to receive requests
4. Put together a brief written request based on our template ([www.lta.org/policy/visit-request](http://www.lta.org/policy/visit-request)).
5. Follow up and speak with their scheduler about timing and options for the event.
6. If possible, keep your event timing fluid. You'll often need to reschedule.
7. Don't forget to invite staff—even if the legislator is unable to attend.

### Who to invite?

You'll want to think strategically about who to invite.

- Landowners who depend on your work—think compelling stories, modest income, beautiful property, etc.
- Members of your board or staff who have a personal relationship with the legislator
- Key coalition partners. Be selective.
- Local officials or federal agency staff who are also involved in and support your work.
- Business owners who depend on land conservation – attorneys, appraisers, outfitters, etc.
- The media? Call up your legislator's press secretary and ask how you can help—from attracting press attendance to a simple article in your newsletter

## Details to consider:

**Capturing the event:** Take lots of pictures, video, and notes on the legislator's remarks

**Transportation:** Calculate those expenses in case the legislators ask

**Meals:** Feel free to serve a meal. There's an ethics exemption for meals up to \$50 at events in-state attended by at least five constituents.

**Awards:** Provide an award, like a nice framed print of conserved land with a plaque.

**Follow-up:** Send a thank-you note to your legislator for making time, but don't forget staff.

## Special considerations for election season:

As a public charity, your organization may never endorse a candidate for public office. It's important that no endorsement is implied:

- If presenting an award, ensure that it references a specific legislative action—like the Conservation Easement Incentive Act.
- If hosting a public or media event where the legislator will have an opportunity to speak, it's prudent to also invite their challenger to that event or another of equal importance.

## The staff of the Land Trust Alliance is here to help.

If you have any questions about how to host a site visit or if you'd like to share your success, please email [policy@lta.org](mailto:policy@lta.org) or call 202-638-4725 and ask to speak with your region's advocacy lead:

- **Southeast:** [Barton James](#) (202-800-2239, [bjames@lta.org](mailto:bjames@lta.org))
- **Northeast:** [Sean Robertson](#) (202-800-2229, [srobertson@lta.org](mailto:srobertson@lta.org))
- **West:** [Bethany O'Donovan](#) (202-800-2240, [bodonovan@lta.org](mailto:bodonovan@lta.org))
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