USE YOUR VOICE TO SHAPE THE FUTURE

Town Hall Guide

Speaking Guide and Talking Points

Town halls are different from legislative meetings. You will not have 15 minutes to share your story, so be sure to make your comment and question succinct. Even though they are different, town halls follow a fairly straightforward format. The representative will talk a bit about wins in the current legislature then there will be time for comments/questions. If virtual, the comment/question segment will likely be pre-submitted.

Logistics (in person)

- Sign up to speak if there is a sign-up sheet, otherwise just speak when the chance is provided. If you are invited to speak, scroll down to the “questions” section of this tool kit.
- Arrive early if you can to make sure you are able to speak.
- Try not to radically change the topic if others are still commenting on a topic.
- Write out what you would like to say and practice it beforehand. It is alright to be reading from your paper! Below is a general template you can use.
- Research your representative to see if they've supported your cause in the past. If they have, this is a great opportunity to thank them! If they haven't, it is a great opportunity to ask them to!

Logistics (virtual)

- If you can speak during the event, sign up to speak if there is a sign-up sheet or speak when the chance is provided.
    - **Note:** Write out what you would like to say and practice it beforehand. It is alright to be reading from your paper! Below is a general template you can use. **TIP:** use the storytelling worksheet to prepare your comments.
- If you can’t speak during the event, submit a question in advance
    - **Note:** They normally will have a Facebook event link to submit questions. If you have trouble finding a question submittal form, reach out to your regional coordinator!
- Research your representative to see if they've supported your cause in the past. If they have, this is a great opportunity to thank them! If they haven't, it is a great opportunity to ask them to!

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Example/Template:

Senator/Representative _____ and staff,

Thank you for holding this meeting. This is the first time I have attended one and did not know what to expect but it is great that you are giving folks in your district a chance to speak to you and express their concerns as well as hear important information on what is happening in Olympia.

Introduce yourself and your college or university – I am a student at ***state college or university*** majoring in ***state major*** and on campus I am involved in ***name clubs, sports, or activities***, which have led me to get involved in the legislative process through the Washington Student Engagement Network (WA-SEN) as part of the College Promise Coalition.

Tell a bit of your story **or** express support for the Washington College Grant or student supports **and** ask a question (see suggested questions you can ask on the next page):

Examples of your story

- To pay for my college I receive scholarships and state financial aid and my parents help; or I would not be able to go to college if it were not for my scholarships;
- I am the first in my family to go to college, my mom and or dad insisted that I go to college and they are right because I know I will be thankful as my life goes on;
- I absolutely love what I am taking in school and I love the university I attend, it is the right fit for me and what I want to accomplish;
- I can't imagine not getting a college degree because what it gives you for the rest of your life;

Key Messages and Priorities (2024)

- Expand state financial aid programs so more students can receive support to complete their postsecondary programs.
- Invest in support initiatives like State Work Study, childcare and navigation supports like career guidance, advising programs, and tutoring.
- Offer more help completing financial aid applications like FAFSA/WASFA.
- Break down barriers, especially financial ones, that allow more students attending public and independent not-for-profit colleges to earn high school and college credit at the same time, such as Dual Credit, Running Start and College in the High School.
- Offer more access to training that leads to jobs in health care, STEM, and other in-demand fields.
- Without education after high school, it's difficult to get a job in our state with opportunities to grow and earn enough to live without constantly worrying about money.

Thats why WA-SEN and the College Promise Coalition set a goal that 70% of Washington students can start and complete education beyond high school by 2030. Now, we need to make sure students know this grant and other resources are there to help **and** make accessing them easier. ***insert question***

Suggested Questions/Comments

- Can you tell us what your approach has been to addressing the need of students pursuing education or training after high school that leads to good paying jobs?
- With all the everyday pressures out there, what advice or suggestions do you have for current or aspiring college students who may be struggling to stick with it?

Thank you (again)

- Thanks again for holding this meeting and for listening. I hope you will continue to support the Washington College Grant and other student supports.
- Thank you again for creating the Washington College Grant, a life changing financial aid program for students and families!

Note: This is meant to be a guide to help you to think about what to share. Keep in mind that your stories (if time allows to share) will be most impactful if you put them into your own words.

Post Town Hall

- Use photos to let people know about your town hall experience on social media. This builds momentum for your cause.

Connect with Legislators throughout the Year

Using the information above, keep your story and higher education funding in front of your legislators by:

- Attending additional town hall meetings. Follow legislators on social media and sign up for their email list so you know when these are happening.
- Writing op-eds in your school paper or other print mediums.
- Activate social media by sharing and/or creating content that captures the importance of your cause
- Write letters, email, thank you cards, etc. to your legislators.