

## Do's and Don'ts for Meetings

During Nurse Day at the Capitol, TNA arranges a meeting with every legislator's office, so nurses can talk to them and their staff. If you have the opportunity to meet with your legislator outside of Nurse Day, **please inform TNA** so that we can help you coordinate and be strategic.

### BEFORE THE MEETING

**Do:** Learn about the lawmaker and the issues, especially TNA's position and why we hold it.

**Do:** Specify the purpose of meeting when contacting the lawmaker.

**Don't:** Wing it.

**Don't:** Forget to discuss issues with TNA or experts first.

### DAY OF THE MEETING

**Do:** Arrive on time.

**Do:** Bring materials to leave behind, such as TNA 1-pagers or policy positions.

**Do:** Get to know the staff.

**Don't:** Be late.

**Don't:** Be angry if the meeting is delayed or canceled. Try to reschedule.

### DURING THE MEETING

**Do:** Keep it simple.

**Do:** Be polite and professional.

**Do:** Make it personal.

**Do:** Keep track of time.

**Don't:** Use acronyms and jargon, or provide deep details unless asked.

**Don't:** Give answers when you don't know them.

**Don't:** Ask for a firm stance.

### AFTER THE MEETING

**Do:** Follow up with a thank you.

**Do:** **Follow up with TNA** with feedback and notes.

**Do:** Keep the conversation going with coworkers, friends, family, school and faith community

**Don't:** Quit! Progress takes time and sweat.

You are the grassroots movement that makes change possible!

## Writing Your Legislator

Legislators value hearing from their constituents through letters or emails. **Before you write, coordinate communication with [TNA](#)** unless you are responding to one of our action alerts.

### USE YOUR OWN WORDS.

- Base your observations on your own experiences.
- Legislators like to hear opinions from their constituents.
- Legislators want to be informed about their district and how legislation would impact businesses and people in their district.

### GIVE CONCRETE REASONS FOR YOUR POSITION.

- Limit the information to one page and discuss just one issue per letter or email.
- Be concise and avoid jargon, including acronyms. Getting too technical can distract from the fundamental message.
- Identify your fundamental message early. Don't make them search to find the purpose of your letter or email.
- If writing about a specific bill, summarize it and identify it by number (e.g., SB17 or HB344) and the legislator who authored it.

### DISCUSS THE POTENTIAL EFFECT OF THE BILL.

- Detail how the bill will affect you, the nursing profession as a whole, and above all, patients, i.e., their constituents.
- Legislators have to vote on many different issues with which they may have had little or no first-hand experience.
- Close by clearly requesting their support or opposition to the legislation, and show how their actions could affect Texans.



**Don't threaten the legislator with punitive action if he or she doesn't vote your way.**

### WRITTEN LETTERS

- Use letterhead if possible.
- Email a copy to TNA:  
[governmentalaffairs@texasnurses.org](mailto:governmentalaffairs@texasnurses.org)

- Address the letter formally:

The Honorable (full name)  
Texas House of Representatives  
Box 2910  
Austin, TX 78768-2910

OR

The Honorable (full name)  
Texas Senate  
Box 12068  
Austin, TX 78711

- Be formal in your salutation:

Dear Representative (last name):

Dear Senator (last name):

### ACTION ALERTS

TNA sends **Action Alerts** to provide a large show of support or opposition to a law or rule. When you get the email:

- Respond quickly.
- Customize the text to share your personal thoughts or story.
- Let other members know in case they missed the email.

## Being a Resource

We want legislators to come to nurses with their health care questions and inquiries. You are key to the success of the legislative efforts of TNA. You are the subject matter expert who can bring a practicing nurse's insight to the issues facing nursing.

### PREPARING BEFORE YOU CONNECT:

- **Tell TNA who want to connect with!** We can provide resources and help coordinate.
- If in person, know who are you going to see. You may not actually get to talk to the legislator. That is OK. Their staff is their resource on information. Make sure you present to them just as you would to the legislator.
- Know the legislator's past record on nursing and health care issues. Are you one of their constituents? This adds weight to your input.
- During the session, get familiar with the legislation TNA is following and our position on each. Know the key points for the legislation you are going to address with the legislator or their staff.



Members can visit [texasnurses.org/actioncenter](https://www.texasnurses.org/actioncenter) to follow bills and advocate for nurse priorities.

### USING TALKING POINTS:

- Print **TNA 1-pagers**, if applicable, and know the talking points for each health topic. How does the topic apply to their district?
- Relate back to your experience as a nurse, if possible. **Make it personal.** Share a story, whether your own or another nurse's.
- Stick to the facts. Being concise and to the point is a benefit and shows you respect their time.

### MAKING YOURSELF USEFUL:

- Help legislators and staff understand the purpose of the legislation.
- What was the background and impetus for filing the bill?
- How it will positively or negatively affect the health of the residents in their district and the state?
- Will it improve access to care? Will it improve patient outcomes?
- What questions do they have about the health care topic?

### ISBAR FOR LEGISLATORS

**I – Introduce:** Introduce yourself, where you live and what you do. If applicable, make sure you tell them that you live in their district.

**S – Situation:** In one sentence, why is this piece of legislation being brought forth?

**B – Background:** What is the history behind the legislation?

**A – Assessment:** What impact will it have on health care in Texas?

**R – Recommendation:** Should the legislator support or not support the bill, based on TNA's position?

## Talking Politics in the Workplace

The nurse's top priority is to provide and advocate for safe, quality care for all patients and communities. To *advocate* literally means to support or argue for a cause or policy. Advocating for patients and the nursing profession creates differing views and discussions. Influencing the outcome of an issue is being *political*. When discussing politics, be professional, prepared and polite at all levels (bedside, unit, hospital, elected officials). Get involved in different ways:

1. **Vote in every election:** national to state to local, as well as elections in your hospital or unit. Learn candidates' platforms for health care issues. If a coworker asks about the candidate, share the facts.
2. **Meet your Chief Nursing Officer.** CNOs vary in leadership styles, clinical practice and nursing journey but need to be politically savvy to advocate for patients and nurses. Tell them you want to contribute!
3. **Join a professional nursing organization**, such as TNA.
  - Remember: Nurses have power in numbers!
  - Gain exposure to nurses outside your workplace. Sharing expertise, experience, passions and frustrations provides a vast arena for learning.
  - See what bills need nurse input. Bills can be nursing-initiated, nursing-supported, or nursing-opposed. Be prepared to share with colleagues and elected officials.
4. **Participate on hospital committees**, such as shared leadership, staffing and peer review.
5. **Meet your elected officials.** Let them know you are a nurse. Ensure that when changes affect patient safety and nursing practice, your voice is heard.
6. **Have an "elevator speech" ready** if someone asks what issues are being addressed or if they can provide support.

Of 66,000 physicians in Texas, 90% belong to an association. **Out of 340,000+ nurses, only 7% do.** For 19 years, Gallup has named nurses as the most trusted profession in the US. But nurses aren't active enough in advocacy. We need more nurses to join TNA and other associations so nurse influence at the capitol can match their importance to patient well-being.

Get familiar with the Nursing Practice Act and rules. The legislature can change the NPA every two years. The Texas Board of Nursing makes rule changes as needed to apply the NPA. TNA tracks all these changes in NurseWatch at [texasnurses.org/NLAC](https://www.texasnurses.org/NLAC).

Being on a staffing committee or peer review committee requires a deep dive into the law and rules as well as the code of ethics and scope of practice. Keep up with the changes and how they may impact nursing practice.



**Remember to  
always keep patient  
safety your priority.**

As colleagues learn of your involvement with nursing organizations and issues, they will seek you out for your input. Celebrate being political and able to talk politics in the workplace.

## Building Grassroots

Public policy impacts fiscal resources, service delivery, communication, bureaucratic or other structures, and systems. Nursing advocacy serves to inform and educate about critical public health policy.

### NURSES MUST PARTICIPATE IN THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

- Health policy needs nursing's perspective.
- Whether or not nurses participate, decisions affecting nursing *will be made*.
- Nursing has benefited from participation since 1907. Even before women could vote, a group of female nurses advocated to standardize nursing education and pass the first Nursing Practice Act.

Reaching out to nurses must be a thoughtful, deliberate, continuous process! Show your peers why they must get involved:

- To strengthen and protect the right of the nursing profession to provide high quality care to those who need access to care
- To ensure nurses have a place at the table and a voice in making decisions that affect the profession and health of Texans

### INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPATION

- Keep informed. Who are your elected officials? What are the terms of office?
- Know the election cycle, including primaries and elections.
- Know where to get "valid" information besides campaign web sites, such as the League of Women Voters.



**"All politics is local."  
Policy issues are  
year-round.**

### AFFECTING THE OUTCOME

- Know who represents you at the local and state level, as well as their legislative committee assignments and interests. What issues will they be considering during the session?
- Provide input on health care issues to the elected person and the staff that inform them year-round. Make sure they know you are a resource for them.

### LOCAL GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

- Use the skills or experiences of local members to form a group with a chairperson to facilitate activities. Looking at the political scene, divide up tasks to facilitate legislative contacts.
- Use a variety of communication techniques to reach nurses: Zoom meetings, conference calls, email, social media.
- Strive to make your GAC known to all local members by posting a call to join, reporting a summary of activities.
- Pair novice advocates with more experienced nurses, with succession planning and building local expertise in mind.
- Plan individual and group post-interview sessions to strengthen skills and provide support to nurses.



**Don't forget about local governments and how nurses can influence local health policy, access to care and other health decisions.**

Having one well-known voice is very important. The power of a collective voice through TNA and other nursing organizations in the Nursing Legislative Agenda Coalition creates a stronger, unified message. When 90% of physicians belong to an association but **only 7% of nurses do**, the voices of 66,000 physicians can outweigh the needs of 340,000 nurses!

We need more nurses to join TNA and other associations so nurse influence at the capitol can match their importance to patient well-being.

## Do's and Don'ts for Media Interviews

### BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

- Do:** Clarify the purpose of the interview with the reporter, and if it will be TV, radio or print.
- Do:** Find a quiet location to hold the interview and a good cell signal or WiFi signal; ethernet is preferred for video calls.

- Don't:** Take an interview from the car or over a Bluetooth connection.
- Don't:** Be nervous! This is just a conversation, and 99% of interviews are recorded so you can restart if you mess up.

### DURING THE INTERVIEW

- Do:** Focus on your message. Make it relevant and personal.
- Do:** Assume everything is on the record, including emails and texts.
- Do:** Smile, relax, be confident and friendly.
- Do:** Steer to your talking points and other relevant information.
- Do:** Offer to send sources or additional data to the reporter.

- Don't:** Answer a question you are uncomfortable with or don't know the answer to.
- Don't:** Use shorthand, jargon or abbreviations.
- Don't:** Talk too fast or too slow.
- Don't:** Try to fill silence.
- Don't:** Be intimidated or argue with the reporter.

### AFTER AN INTERVIEW

- Do:** Follow up with the reporter.
- Do:** Send the interview to TNA when it's online.
- Do:** Share the final interview on social media.

- Don't:** Get upset if there's a mistake in the piece. Politely ask the reporter to issue a correction.
- Don't:** Publicly bash or deride a reporter or others in the story.

### CREATE SOUNDBITES

Condense your message to one sentence, and practice saying it out loud. Have four or five sentences ready to support your primary message. Answer the reporter with full sentences. For example:

**Reporter:** Do nurses in Texas support this bill?

**Nurse:** Texas nurses are in favor of this bill because it will....

### LOOK GOOD ON CAMERA

- Choose clothing that makes you feel confident!
  - Pick conservative cuts in solid colors, except all white or black.
  - Avoid small patterns, including on ties and socks.
  - Keep jewelry small and discreet.
- Create an appropriate background or setting.
- Use makeup to avoid shine. People who regularly wear makeup may want to go heavier on eyeliner, blush and lipstick. People who prefer not to wear makeup can use a translucent powder to reduce shine.