

As an Oklahoma Ag teacher, getting to know your legislator has become (and for that matter, always has been) a must. Our professional organization hires McSpadden & Associates, LLC to lobby for us, and they have done an excellent job in that effort, but they can only do so much. Knowing our elected officials on a first name basis becomes even more important to shore up what we ask the lobbyist to do.

One of the activities that legislators like is to have our students visit them. Within that visit comes a photo opportunity that can be used in a lot of ways, including newspaper articles, state degree applications, etc. The FFA day at the Capitol is an excellent time to do this.

Another occasion is at the OYE showmanship contest for legislators. Each year students are asked to mentor legislators, teaching them to show livestock. If you haven't been asked to do that, contact the OYE and get on the list as this is another great photo opportunity.

During State FFA Convention is another time to work with legislators. There is a formal dinner held with state officials where a picture is taken of you and your student with a legislator or other official whom you were assigned. Kendall Brashers with the Oklahoma FFA Foundation is the person to contact for that event.

In your community with FFA activities is probably one of the most important aspects of getting to know the officials. Inviting them to your labor auction, stock show, banquet, hot dog dinner and similar events will pay dividends because they can see first-hand what they are supporting. Ask them to attend the PI Christmas dinner; ask them to judge the speech contest; ask them to present an award at the FFA banquet.

On the other side, show up at their campaign functions and donate to their cause. It doesn't have to be that much, but they do notice who is there.

Your legislators can be identified and contacted through the state web page:

Representatives: <http://www.okhouse.gov/>

Senators: <http://www.oksenate.gov/>

The last point to consider is that they are people, too. Sometimes we may think that they are not approachable but in reality they are someone who represents us and are doing their job because they care.

- Submitted by David Dorrell, Cache Agricultural Education instructor.