Making Your Case with Decision Makers

General Advice:
♦ Maintain an ongoing relationship
♦ Be visible! -- show up where you think local officials might be
♦ Invite them to your library
  o Events
  o Media opportunities
♦ Use your contacts
♦ Meet with newly elected officials and appointees as soon as possible
♦ Make sure they know about your successes
♦ Send a gift when appropriate
♦ Make it clear that you share their commitment to the issues

Do’s
♦ Be on time for your appointment with an official; even better, arrive early!
♦ Have a business card handy and present it at the beginning of the meeting.
♦ Use proper titles, even if you know the official personally.
♦ Prioritize what you want to say, in case your time with the official is limited.
♦ Provide a one-page briefing sheet with a clear statement of the action you are seeking, and key facts. Include contact information for additional information.
♦ Remain calm and focused.
♦ Know your issues thoroughly, and practice talking about them if necessary.
♦ Be prepared to make your case in any kind of situation—a hallway, the elevator, an outer office. Practice your elevator speech in advance!
♦ Tell your story—use specific examples from the official’s district/ward/neighborhood to make your case.
♦ Tailor your remarks to include the official’s particular expertise or interest.
♦ Thank the official for taking time to meet with you.
♦ If appropriate, follow-up with a thank-you note mentioning the major issues.
♦ Never miss an opportunity to greet and talk with officials, even on an informal basis at community events.
♦ Concentrate your energies on officials that represent your ward, hometown, district or state.
♦ Watch your time and when the official makes it clear the meeting is over, leave graciously.

Don’ts
♦ Don’t be concerned if you don’t know the answer to a question, and get back to the official promptly with the requested information.
♦ Don’t digress from the issues at hand.
♦ If the official disagrees with you, don’t take a confrontational position. Make your case as well as you can, and end the meeting on a positive note whenever possible.