

PARTICIPANT PACKET
Welcome to the
Take your Legislator to Work Campaign!

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

Thank you for working with the Idaho First Employment Consortium (IEFC) in inviting your legislator to visit you at work! You are representing individuals with disabilities who want to work in the community and make a living wage. You will show your elected official that work is important for everyone. Everyone deserves a job so they can pay taxes, give to the community, and make our state a better place to live.

You get to show your skills and talents to your legislator. The Idaho Employment First Consortium wants to show the **employ-ability** of individuals with disabilities. We want to demonstrate how you contribute to Idaho's workforce. You can influence the way your legislator decides to spend public money and to create more opportunities for integrated community employment.

Thank you!

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Take your Legislator to Work Campaign!

Getting Started

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month. We would like to start the month off with these visits. If at all possible, please schedule your visit for one of your work shifts during the week of October 7- 11th or later in the month if necessary. Plan for visits that will last for 30 minutes to 1 hour.

As soon as possible:

Step 1: Think about why you would like to be a part of this event. You may want to talk to your job coach (if you have one), someone at your workplace, or another person who supports you. This will help in coming up with the message you want to give to the legislator when they visit.

Step 2: Ask permission from your employer to invite a guest to your work place. If your employer gives the OK, then get started with your planning! If they are not able to at this time, tell them that you appreciate their willingness to consider your request and hope they will participate at a later date.

Step 3: Make a plan.

Send the Invitation

Find the names and contact information for the legislators from your district. You can search by district on a map on the Idaho Legislature website at:

<http://legislature.idaho.gov/who'smylegislator.htm>

If you already know their name you can find their contact information at:

<http://legislature.idaho.gov/about/contactbyname.cfm>

Here are a few things to consider:

When is the best time for a visit? (not during peak business hours)

Date and time

It will be best to make two plans so that your legislator has a choice. Choose a quiet day when you are not too busy so you have more time to talk, 30-60 minutes is enough time. Include a coffee break if you can.

Plan A :

Date: _____ **Time:** _____

Location: _____

Who will be there? (job coach, supervisor) _____

Plan B :

Date: _____ **Time:** _____

Location: _____

Who will be there? (job coach, supervisor: _____

Once you have the times and dates you can send out the invitation. A sample letter is attached. Since they will be visiting your work place it would be great to have your employer sign the letter as well. This will let the legislator know how important their visit is to both you and your employer. Once the invitation has been sent, it is important to follow-up with a telephone call to confirm the visit.

Reminder Call

A week before the scheduled visit call your legislator to remind them of your invitation to visit. Remember to share with them your name, where your job is (name of the company and street address) and what time you expect them. If they are not able to come and visit you could suggest that they pick another time that is more convenient for them. You will then need to confirm this with your work to make sure it is a good time for them too.

Here is a sample conversation:

“Good morning, my name is _____. I live in _____ (name of town). I’m an employee at _____. October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month. I recently sent you an invitation to come and visit me at work for Take your Legislator to Work Day. I hope you have made time in your schedule to come. Do have any questions or need any additional information from me?”

Have this Information Ready:

Your Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Employer’s Name: _____

Your Work Address: _____

Your Job Coach’s Name: _____

Your Community Rehabilitation Provider: _____

When Your Legislator Arrives

- Introduce your employer and co-workers to the legislator.
- Give your legislator a tour of your workplace.
- Show him or her what you do at work.
- Take a break. Make time to stop working and sit down and talk with your legislator. Remember to include the employer in the conversation. His or her perspective will be important to the legislator.
- **Take pictures.** Make time to take pictures. Make plans ahead of time for someone to have a camera and help take pictures during your visit. Legislators like to have a photo of visits. It is our hope you will be willing to share story and pictures with us and allow us to use them to promote the importance of work to people with disabilities.

Press Release

This event may be even more special if you let your local newspapers or television station know about your visit before the date it is scheduled. If possible, arrange for them to also come along for the visit. A sample press release is included in the toolkit.

What should you talk about?

Your legislator is a regular person just like you, your family, and friends. They want to get to know you. Many people think they have to be “experts” to talk to their legislators. Not so! **Take your Legislator to Work** is an awareness campaign. It’s about people having valued jobs and being paid for what you contribute - something you are an “expert” on.

Prepare questions and practice what you want to say:

Things to talk about:

This is my job... or My job is...

I work _____ days and _____ hours.

I like my job because...

I want to work here because...

Working is important for people with disabilities because...

People with disabilities want to contribute to the community. We want...

My dreams for the future are...

Some of my friends with disabilities work...

Introduce your employer and co-workers.

Don't forget to get pictures taken!

After Your Visit

After the event, make sure to send a thank you note. A heart-felt “Thank you” will make the visit memorable for your legislator, so please send a note that reminds them of the visit; you can even include a picture from their visit. In your note, please provide contact information to keep the doors of communication open. We hope that you will get to know your legislator and stay in contact after the Take your Legislator to Work Day.

Here are some examples:

Dear _____,

I really enjoyed meeting you at my workplace, _____. Thank you for listening to my story and sharing my love of my work and my community. I look forward to staying in touch with you.

Thank you,

Or

Dear _____,

Thank you for taking the time to meet me at my workplace. We hope our conversation about the importance of community employment will help you with the difficult decisions you are facing in the legislature. If I could be of further assistance in the future, please call me at (XXX) XXX-XXXX.

Sincerely,

(your name)

Follow up

Don't forget your employer! Please use the sample note to thank your employer.

Here is an idea:

Dear _____,

Thank you for allowing me to invite my legislator to visit me at work. I wanted to show how much I love my work. I wanted _____ to see how important my work is. I appreciate working for you and with my co-workers.

Sincerely,

(your name)

After October, the Idaho Employment First Consortium hopes to put together stories about people with disabilities working in the community to give to all the legislators and the Governor. If you would like to share your experiences in the book, please let us know!

Thank you!

The Idaho Employment First Consortium would like to take this opportunity to thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to participate in this campaign and for sharing part of your day with your legislator.

Your participation will help shine a positive light on the valuable work citizens with disabilities contribute to Idaho.