

# 5 TIPS FOR BIRD-DOGGING

In an activist context, “bird-dogging” refers to a tactic where an individual engages with a politician in an attempt to influence them. “Bird-dogs” ask pointed questions both to elicit a response from a politician and also educate the media and their community. Bird-dogging can be done at public events like festivals or town hall meetings and in more personal encounters like in an elevator or at the airport.



**LEARN MORE ABOUT AFSC'S WORK IN GAZA: [AFSC.ORG/CRISIS-GAZA](https://afsc.org/crisis-gaza)**

1

## GET TO KNOW YOUR ELECTED OFFICIAL

The more you know about your member of Congress, the more strategic you can be. Read their website and other media coverage to learn their stated positions and committee and caucus membership. Check out congressional scorecards from organizations like IMEU with relevant bills or letters your member may have signed onto. Learn about their faith background, family, hometown, school, work history, and travel to the Middle East. Subscribe to their newsletter and follow their social media. Research who donates to their campaign. Learn the names of their chief of staff, foreign policy staff, and constituent affairs liaison. Make sure you could spot your politician on the street!

2

## DO YOUR RESEARCH

Check your member of Congress's social media, newsletter, and the Congressional recess schedule to find a time and place to engage them. Plan ahead—some events require registration. Invite a friend along to record your interaction. You might find your politician at a parade, fundraiser, ribbon-cutting ceremony, town hall meeting, protest, or farmer's market, but you can also bird-dog online!

3

## PREPARE YOUR QUESTIONS

Practice your phrasing—you might only have less than a minute! Lead with your identity (“I work as a teacher in your district...”). Share the reason you care (“My faith compels me to care about the dignity of all people...”). Make a concise ask (“Will you support ending arm sales to Israel while it commits genocide?”). Follow-up (“Are you saying you support sending more US weapons to Israel to target hospitals, schools, and aid centers?”). Be persistent (“I wasn't asking about a political solution for the Middle East, I'm asking you if you will hold governments accountable for harm”).

4

## SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE

Recording your bird-dogging encounter can help you publicize a politician's stated position, prevent the politician from denying their response, and hold them accountable for future action. Watch the recording after, it might help you strategize on how to improve your question or give you a better sense of how your bird-dogging was received by others around you. If you can't record your encounter, try to take a photo instead. You can share the photo on social media and document what happened. Be sure to tag your member of Congress—their communications staff do pay attention to public posts!

5

## FOLLOW-UP

Draw more attention to the issue you care about by writing a letter to the editor about your experience. Call the office of your politician. (ex. “I spoke to my Representative at my neighborhood picnic and they said they will support the Block the Bombs bill...”) You can also send an email or a handwritten note to your politician with more details about the issue you raised. Don't include external links in your email—they won't be opened due to security concerns. Finally, commit to attend future events and recruit others to become bird-doggers!

