

# MISTAKES TO AVOID

Whether you are proposing new ideas, joining others in supporting an issue, or trying to defeat a bad idea, there are some common mistakes to avoid:

- **Lone Ranger expectations.** Don't expect one person in an organization to do it all! It takes many voices to make a difference.
- **Petitions and postcard or email campaigns.** These lack the personal voice that persuades decision makers that constituents really care about the issue. However, this may be used as a last resort if it is all you can do to generate support for your issue.
- **Crying wolf!** Don't sound so many alarms that your supporters can't sort out the real need for action.
- **Showing up at a hearing without following the protocol for signing up to testify.** Learn the local customs and rules on testifying. You may need to come early and fill out forms if they are required.
- **Don't overstay your welcome.** Don't exceed the allotted time. If it appears that the officials are anxious to leave or move on, shorten your presentation, but state the most salient points.
- **Missing the boat.** Don't wait until late in the decision making process to voice your support or concerns.
- **Surprises.** Decision makers expect honesty and full disclosure. When telling your story, you need to be honest and tell both sides of an issue during your testimony. Use persuasive arguments to demonstrate your position and stick to the facts.
- **Angry, hysterical, or threatening communication.** Don't use a negative, condescending, threatening, or intimidating tone. You will only alienate the decision maker and cause bad feelings that might hurt your case. Be nice!