

Legislative Day 2016 - RDN-Legislator Role Play Example

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| RDN | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hi, Senator Jones, my name is Meghan Lyle and I'm a constituent in your district (<i>shakes hands with Legislator</i>). I'm also a registered dietitian nutritionist working in the nephrology service at St. Joseph Medical Center in Tacoma. I am hoping to talk with you briefly about the role of the dietitian in our state and how we can support our state's food and nutrition initiatives. |
| Legislator | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I'm always glad to talk with a constituent. Unfortunately, we're on the floor today and I need to get back to my seat shortly (<i>glances at watch</i>), but I'm happy to talk with you until then—have a seat (<i>gestures to a chair</i>). What brings you to Olympia today? |
| RDN | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I'm here with other registered dietitian nutritionists from across the state meeting with their legislators as part of the Washington State Academy's annual Legislative Day We hope to raise consciousness about our profession <i>and</i> explore ways we can work with you to develop and implement sound public policies regarding Food and Nutrition in Washington State. |
| Legislator | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well, there is a lot of interest in food and nutrition these days. But I have to plead ignorance, what exactly is a dietitian—is it the same as a nutritionist? |
| RDN | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not, exactly—anyone can call themselves a nutritionist. But a registered dietitian nutritionist is different. Our training is similar to that of a physician, pharmacist or nurse practitioner. Like them, we have extensive coursework in chemistry, physiology and biochemistry as well as food, nutrition, psychology, communications, and business. We have a minimum of a bachelor's degree from an accredited program plus an extensive, supervised internship. After that, to become a registered dietitian, we have to pass a national registration exam with the Credentialing branch of the American Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. And then, like other health professionals, we're required to maintain current expertise in our field through continuing education. Dietitians can be Certified by our Washington State Department of Health. |
| Legislator | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gosh, I had no idea. So, where exactly do dietitians work and what do they do? |
| RDN | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dietitian nutritionists work in the food service industry, hospitals, universities, public health settings, business, with sports teams or facilities, and in school districts, food service and nursing homes—there's just a tremendous range of expertise in the field. The common thread, however, is that we are experts in food and nutrition. We know food and nutrient composition, food preparation, science, and teaching people how to make positive and practical changes in their food and nutrition behaviors. Those types of changes make tremendous differences in the quality and quantity of life and also save money in terms of health care costs. Our role is really critical given the growing incidence of obesity and diabetes and the overall health care crisis. Did you happen to see the recent ABC show, "<i>My Diet is Better than Yours?</i>" It was a short-term reality show featuring a variety of trainers working with clients. The winner of the show was the Registered Dietitian Nutritionist! |
| Legislator | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You may be right—it sounds like dietitians have a lot to offer. Unfortunately, I need to get back to my seat (<i>stands and extends hand</i>). But it was good to meet with you and I would like to talk more about how we might tap into your expertise. |
| RDN | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> That would be great! What if I contact your staff to arrange a meeting when the session is over and you're back in our District? |
| Legislator | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perfect—I'll look forward to seeing you then (<i>they walk together toward the door</i>)! |