

## Tips for Effective Lobbying

- **Remember that lawmakers are human beings.** Begin your meeting with a compliment, if possible. Be friendly, polite, and dress respectfully. The Golden Rule applies to lobbying, too.
- **Never be late.** It's a sign of disrespect that will be remembered when the lawmaker considers your viewpoint. You're also likely to find that the member has left for another appointment.
- **Put in it writing.** Always provide a fact sheet on your issue to lawmakers and their staff. If it's not on paper, it won't be remembered. Plus, staffers need information to write memos and floor statements for their bosses. Do the work for them.
- **Do your homework.** Know if the lawmaker has taken a stance on the issue before or if she/he has particular areas of interest or concern.
- **All politics is local.** Come armed with information about how the issue will affect the lawmaker's district and local reasons for why the lawmaker should take the stance you advocate.
- **Never lie or make up information.** A lobbyist's greatest strength is her/his credibility—lose that and you're through. If you don't know the answer to a question, tell the lawmaker you will try to find out and then provide the information promptly in a letter, e-mail or call to their staff.
- **There is strength in numbers and strange bedfellows.** Build coalitions that are as broad and deep as you can make them. Mention how many members you have in the member's district (if it's sizeable) and the number of groups in your coalition.
- **Be a good listener.** It will help endear you to the lawmaker and give you valuable information about the lawmaker's views and concerns. Don't do all the talking; have a conversation.
- **Press for a commitment.** Ask the lawmaker directly if she/he will take the particular stance you support or undertake the task you've requested. Polite nods tell you nothing.
- **Build a relationship.** Try to get to know lawmakers and their staff. Look for common interests, backgrounds, etc. Members and staff are more likely to meet with you again and listen to your views if they know who you are and have a friendly feeling toward you.
- **Say thank you.** Always thank lawmakers for taking the time to meet with you and for any good stances they take on your issues. Everyone likes positive feedback.
- **Don't forget staff.** They are the eyes and ears—and the doorkeepers—for their bosses.
- **Be strategic.** Focus your efforts on the persuadable "swing" votes. Don't waste your time on avowed opponents of the issue or on your known allies (except to say thank you.)
- **Don't burn bridges unnecessarily.** Use confrontation as a tool, not a way of life. Lawmakers won't always do what you want, but they might sometimes if you keep a cordial relationship.
- **The squeaky wheel gets the grease.** Don't expect miracles. However, polite persistence pays off. And remember, the power of the ballot box is yours!

# Checklist

## PRE-MEETING

1. Do you know what your “ask” is?
2. Did you pack your fact-sheet (with your contact information on it) and any back up (i.e., newspaper article, report, photos, etc.)?
3. Are you ready to refute opposition arguments?
4. Are you ready to “Start where they are, not where you are”?
5. Do you have a personal anecdote to share?
6. Do you have a couple of questions that you want to ask?
7. Did you bring along a “thank you” or a compliment to share?
8. Is there a field trip or event upcoming to which you can invite the lawmaker?

## POST-MEETING

1. Did you make the “ask”?
2. What did the lawmaker say/promise/question/dispute/request?
3. Why does the lawmaker support/oppose/have no position on your “ask”?
4. Make a note of:
  - The date, time, and location of the meeting
  - The lawmaker’s staff who attended the meeting
  - What teammates joined you for the meeting
  - What information you shared with the lawmaker
  - What strongly held beliefs, personal experience, trusted sources, etc., that the lawmaker cited to back up their position/actions/vote
  - Mementoes, awards, photos, etc., displayed in the lawmaker’s office
5. Do you owe the lawmaker any additional information?
6. Did you send a follow-up letter, e-mail, or note?