

## Tips for Lobbying Your Legislator

Here are a few tips that will help you be a successful lobbyist. First and foremost, you don't have to be an expert to lobby your representatives. Whether it is lobbying to get a child to clean their room, the boss for a raise, a co-worker to help out on a project -- we all lobby to get things we want. We list the arguments for our position, we point out the problems with the other side's arguments, we enlist the help of those who are more powerful in the situation and we use our own position of power in the situation to get our way. All of this is lobbying. Your viewpoint is important and worth expressing. Never forget that democracy depends on citizens expressing their views.

- Ask politely for a short appointment -- 10 to 15 minutes -- and then keep it that way. It's best to ask for an appointment during the legislative session. If your targeted legislator lives in another part of the state, they will not have to make an extra trip.
- Your maximum influence comes in addressing your comments directly to **your own** legislator.
- Whether making the contact in person or in writing, address the Senator or Representative properly.
- Identify yourself immediately at each contact. Public officials meet too many people to remember everyone.
- Establish your own credentials or expertise on the subject of legislation under consideration.
- Say exactly what you want the legislator to do -- using your own words or language prepared by your advocacy organization. If your issue involves legislation, cite the specific bill's name or number.
- Use bullet points in any printed material you bring (you may leave more detailed reading when you leave).
- Answer any questions concisely -- if more detail is wanted, the legislator will ask for it. Be honest and direct. Do not be afraid to admit you do not know all the answers.
- Take the time to become familiar with the differing views and perspectives on the bill. When speaking with your representative, acknowledge them and offer comments that compare or contrast your position and the other positions. Remember for every issue, there are **many** different views, none of which is **absolutely** correct
- Once you have presented your case, be polite and listen to what the legislator has to say.
- Be prepared to leave on time (unless the legislator keeps the conversation going).
- The better organized and shorter the presentation, the easier follow-up appointments will be.
- After the meeting, promptly send any information you promised during the meeting.
- Follow up your visit with a thank-you letter. Restate your case briefly and provide any information you may have promised during your meeting. This gives you a second chance to make your point.
- Do not continue to call the legislator after your meeting. Be sure to leave the best way to