



Lobbying 101 – General Tips

General Rules

- **Legislators are really busy people** – They are required to deal with dozens of issues at any one time. To the extent that you have their attention you need to use it very wisely.
- **Know your legislator** – Including their staff and central staff – relationships are critically important to lobbying – every bridge you burn makes you less valuable as a lobbyist – and this means the legislator themselves, their staff or central staff. What did the legislator do before they were elected? Try to make a connection with your organization – does someone with your group have kids in the same school district, belong to the same club/group, or live in the same neighborhood?
- **Know your audience/district** – It is not only wise to know who you are talking to, but who they represent – what district do they represent – what is the nature of that district – urban, suburban, rural – growing, shrinking – higher/lower than average unemployment, recent hot issues on a local level. Is the person thinking about running for higher office – what district would that be?

Meeting Tips

- **Face to face meetings** – Try to keep your group small 3-5 people. Meet as a group beforehand to parcel out who is going to make which points. Introduce yourselves at the beginning of the meeting and make clear any connections you have with the lawmaker – you are a constituent or know a friend of theirs.
- **Make good arguments** – You need to be clear and concise – no beating around the bush. Keep written materials concise as well.
- **Make it personal** – Explain how your problem is going to directly impact the people living in their district. Even better, bring people from their district to your meeting to make the point. Use anecdotes to illustrate your main points.
- **Listening** – The number 1 skill to concentrate on – you have to listen to get to know your legislator, to know where possible areas of compromise exist, and to show respect. Your meeting should be a 50/50 exchange – you should not talk more than the lawmaker. Listening is also key outside of meetings – sometimes in the hallways of the Capitol it pays to have one conversation and listen to the one behind you.
- **What makes them pay attention to you?** – For some lawmakers a good logical argument will carry the day, but that is rare. In most cases you need to convince them that the issue directly impacts residents of their district, their constituents support your recommended change and they are watching what is happening on a particular issue.