



Tips on How to Lobby Your Legislator

Lobbying is the act of talking to officials about the merits of your position. It is an important, normal, and common everyday occurrence for lawmakers. Your goal is to influence their position based on your knowledge and understanding of the issues. Below are some DOs and DON'Ts of lobbying to help make your experience as positive and effective as possible.

DO:

- Address your Senator or Representative using his or her formal title.
- Identify yourself immediately and establish clearly that you are a constituent.
- Know the name, bill number, and status of the legislation you are discussing.
- Use your own words to describe why you care about the issue.
- Be brief and clear, polite and reasonable.
- Whenever possible, establish your own credentials or expertise on the subject.
- Familiarize yourself with any counterarguments to your position and develop responses.
- Treat office staff and aides courteously. Their cooperation can make or break your chances of reaching elected officials themselves.
- Know that you may meet with an aide instead of the legislator.
- Give officials succinct, easy-to-read literature—highlight important facts and arguments and include your contact information.
- Keep the door open for further discussion in spite of any apparently negative attitudes.

DON'T:

- Arrive unprepared.
- Discuss more than one bill or issue at a time, unless you're asked to do so.
- Act rudely or angrily toward legislators or their staff regardless of what you feel.
- Argue—although it is important to state any counter-information in a friendly way.
- Back recalcitrant legislators into a corner—keep an open door for ongoing communication.
- Overstay your welcome.