

Legislative Lobbying Tips

PERSUADING LEGISLATORS TO DO THE RIGHT THING

1. **Your own state senator and representative:** Your own legislators will be most responsive to you. It is their job to represent you. It is especially useful to develop an on-going relationship with them so you can learn about what is most important to them.
2. **The Governor:** The governor is also directly responsible to you as his constituent. He has the power to approve and disapprove every piece of legislation passed.
3. **Legislative leadership:** This group includes the House Speaker, House majority leader, and minority leader, the Senate majority leader and minority leader and committee chairs. These people determine whether or not a bill gets a hearing and whether the political party will make it a priority to pass or be defeated.
4. **Committee members:** The members of any committee any bill goes through will have the most input on that bill. They will discuss it in depth, and will have chances to change it (amend it) or defeat it before it gets to the whole Senate or House.

PERSONAL VISIT

- **A face-to-face meeting** is the most effective way to lobby your own legislators or committee members.
- **Call in advance to set up an appointment.** You can meet in your home district or at the capitol. If you call and reach a secretary or answering machine, give your name, address, phone, and a general idea of what you want to talk about.
- **If the legislator is unable to make an appointment, call them out of session.** Call the house or senate information office to find out when they are in session. Then go to the House or Senate chambers, write your legislator a note asking them to come out and talk to you. Have one of the pages take the note in for you. They usually come out. It is also possible to call legislators out of committee meetings in the same way.
- **Plan what you will say in advance.** Include why you think a bill should be passed or defeated, your related personal experience, the impact it will have on your community.
- **Be on time,** and wait for the legislator if needed. It helps.

- **Present your perspective clearly.** Don't hurry through your presentation; be relaxed, get all your major points across.
- **Listen to their concerns.** Respond to objections with additional information or perspectives. If you don't know how to address their concerns, say so. Follow up with additional information if needed.
- **Thank them** for their time.

LETTERS

One well-written letter can change a legislator's mind about an issue.

Letters are usually the best way for individuals to lobby the governor and legislative leaders.

To write an effective letter:

- Type or write neatly.
- Stick to one subject per letter.
- Keep it to one page.
- Tell them which bill you are writing to support or oppose. Give the bill number and name.
- Tell them what problem you think the bill will solve or create and why.
- Tell your personal story and/or information on how this affects people around you.
- Tell them what you want them to do. Urge them to vote for or against the bill

PHONE CALLS

If the secretary or aid answers:

- Tell them your name and address.
- Tell them you are calling to ask the legislator to vote for or against the specific bill.
- Give the bill number if you can.

If your legislator answers:

- Tell them your name and where you live.
- Tell them you want them to support or oppose a specific bill. Identify the bill by name and number.
- Briefly tell them why you think it is important.
- Ask for their position on the bill; get a definite answer on how they will vote, if you can.