BASIC DOs and DON’Ts of LOBBYING

Be Prepared

The emotional impact of your personal story is very powerful. Choose a story that will illustrate one of the main points of your visit.

Give anecdotes and specific examples pertinent to your life.

Be Honest

Do not guess or make up an answer. Do not hesitate to say, “I don’t know, but I can get that information for you.”

Know the basics. Don’t worry that you’re not an expert – you don’t need to be.

Be Brief

State your views concisely and clearly. Legislators may have only a few minutes to meet with you, so be prepared and succinct.

Stay on message. Legislators will try to change the discussion, often by asking you technical questions or by shifting focus to their own priorities. Your job is to turn the conversation back to your topic.

Do not overkill. Recognize when you’ve received what you came for. Do not ramble.

Be Respectful and Polite

Always address legislators properly (Assemblyman/Assemblywoman/Senator). State points of disagreements in a straightforward way, then go back to your message.
More Lobbying Tips

**Breathe:** Take a few deep breaths before meetings. Just be yourself!

**Be Reliable:** When you make an appointment with a legislator, keep it. *Be punctual,* if you need to cancel an appointment, call the legislator’s office as soon as possible. When you tell a member you will send information, *do so promptly.*

**Select a Spokesperson and Assign Roles:** Appoint a member of your group to introduce everyone and make the three main points of your visit. Plan which members of the group will highlight each talking point then role play your points prior to each meeting to keep them brief. The spokesperson should reiterate the main points at the end of meeting.

**Don’t Be Timid or Awestruck:** These are your elected representatives who also happen to be human. As a constituent, you shouldn’t allow a legislator to dominate the conversation or give speeches. Courteously, but forcefully, make your points and ask your questions. Try to get the legislator back on point.

**End Your Visit with a Question:** Ask for support, which many constituents fail to do.

**Leave Something Tangible:** A fact sheet or a copy of a bill (if applicable)—anything that visually will remind your legislator of your visit and your position on an issue.

**Debrief and Follow-Up:** Immediately following the meeting, members of your group should review their notes to be certain everyone knows: (1) what was said; (2) what was promised by all parties; and (3) what next steps are needed to gain (or, maintain) the legislator’s support. *Honestly* evaluate the group’s performance before your next meeting, to identify your collective strengths and weaknesses. Your efforts should be coordinated so promises made (i.e., sending more information, attending a district office meeting, etc.) are fulfilled in a *timely* manner.

**Thank You Letter:** Send a thank-you letter that (1) expresses your appreciation for the visit; (2) summarizes the purpose of the visit; and (3) reiterates the action you want taken by the legislator. The letter should be handwritten or typed (no photocopied form letters!), and mailed within a few days of the meeting.

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