

Legislative Skills Briefing Prepared by Stewart Clifton

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Ten tips for the occasional lobbyist

1. Develop relationship before you need the vote or action.
2. Do your homework on the legislator/administrator and the legislation/issue.
3. Respect the official and the office.
4. Provide short, clear information, without jargon.
5. Provide accurate information.
6. Never threaten.
7. Know that there are no permanent friends or permanent enemies.
8. Know the formal and informal rules.
9. Discuss one issue at a time when possible.
10. Give this task/opportunity the time and effort you give other important tasks.

Tips for in-person visits with elected officials

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1. Make appointment beforehand if possible. It's also permissible and with some legislators actually preferred for you to drop by and inquire of staffer if this is a possible time for a visit.
2. Meet with staffers if legislator is unavailable. Sometimes meeting with a key staffer is almost as good as meeting with a legislator. Don't turn that down if offered.
3. Be courteous but don't apologize. You have a right to try to influence your elected officials, to meet with them and to express your views.
4. Remember you are building a relationship. Unless you really are a close friend, introduce yourself every time you meet, wear a nametag and when possible a group identification.
5. If you already know the elected official or at least have met them, make sure you tell them and remind them of how you know them.
6. Tell them if you or someone in your group is a constituent.
7. For groups, appoint a key spokesperson who will facilitate the meeting and keep it going: Include:
Who you are (each person present should be introduced)
What your organization does
What you need from your legislator
A reference to the fact sheet you have prepared
8. Provide short, clear information --not jargon or technical terms! Best points only, written and oral.
9. Don't overstay, threaten, burn bridges, attack the legislator for his/her record on your issue(s), or disparage government or politics.
10. Ask for a vote for your position and try to get an answer. But remember it's legitimate for elected officials to reserve judgment on a bill.
11. Thank the legislator for meeting with you and follow oral thanks with a written note.
12. Follow up as needed. After the visit, follow up with any information that you promised during the visit. When you leave the meeting, your work is often just beginning. Arrange for any unanswered questions to be addressed and for others to contact.
13. Keep in touch during legislative session – contact your legislator on issues of interest to your organization, and remind him/her of your visit.