

LOBBYING TIPS

BE PUNCTUAL.

Know how much time is allotted for your visit, and respect that lawmakers have very busy schedules during session. They may be running late, but you should not be.

INTRODUCE YOURSELF.

Tell the lawmaker your name and what issue(s) you are there to discuss. If you are with a group, make sure that everyone in your group has the chance to introduce themselves. Don't assume that the legislator knows who you are or the reason for your visit. And if you live in their district, make sure to let them know!

BE POLITE AND FRIENDLY.

Greet the legislator with a smile and remain friendly and cordial throughout the meeting. Some legislators may disagree with you, but should never be nasty or partisan. Regardless of their initial position, don't be afraid to state your case.

STAY ON TOPIC AND AVOID SMALL TALK.

While you may be interested in any number of policies or problems, if you're at the Capitol to lobby for a specific issue, stick to the subject and refrain from talking about other bills or subjects. Legislators may also get off-topic or want to chat about what's going on back home. Do your best to politely redirect them back to the issue at hand.

KNOW YOUR FACTS AND TELL YOUR STORY.

Lawmakers will want to know the details about your bill or issue. What are you asking for? How much money will it cost and how will it be spent? Who will be helped? What problem will it solve? What difference will it make? Give them explicit, specific information, but also be prepared to tell your personal story. Why is this issue impactful for you, your business, or your community?

BE UPFRONT ABOUT OPPOSITION.

Legislators will want to get the full picture, including whether there is any criticism or opposition to your bill. This is an opportunity for you to openly acknowledge any opposition and state your rebuttal.

ASK FOR WHAT YOU WANT.

You're meeting with the legislator because you want them to do something. As you wrap up your meeting, clearly restate what you are asking them to do: sign on as a co-author, vote for your bill, or talk to a committee chair or other legislators in their caucus about your bill.

PROVIDE AN INFORMATIONAL HANDOUT.

Lawmakers are busy and have hundreds of meetings each session. Leaving them with informational materials allows them to go back and review what you said during your meeting. And if your legislator can't make it, or has to cut a meeting short, you can always leave the handout with their legislative assistant.

SAY THANK YOU.

No matter how the meeting went, thank the legislator for their time when you leave. Later, send a note via email or mail following up and thanking them again. If your lawmaker supports your cause, thank them publicly via social media or by writing a letter to their local news outlet. And if your bill passes, thank them again when session concludes.

If your legislator was not available to meet, or if your meeting gets canceled, you should still go to their office to drop off your materials. Many legislative offices will have a sign-in sheet, where you can write down your information so that the legislator will know you stopped by. If their legislative assistant is there, feel free to talk briefly with them about your issue and why you are visiting the Capitol.