

► They Need Us – We Need Them

Representing the people is a lawmakers primary concern. However, they must also be mindful of re-election. They need us to be elected and re-elected. We need our lawmakers to achieve our legislative and regulatory agenda. Successful citizen legislative advocacy is possible when the reciprocal nature of this relationship is fully understood. The following Do's and Don'ts are an important part of this relationship.

► Do's to Remember

- **Time is precious.** All letters phone calls, office visits, etc. to your lawmaker should be “short and sweet.” Get to the point soon and focus on your issue.
- **Keep it simple stupid (KISS).** Explain in simple and straightforward terms the logic supporting your position. Get to the point, cover the basics and make sure the legislator understands your main point. The most effective logic involves jobs, costs, and how many people will it affect.
- **Staff is as important as the lawmaker.** Staff are often the ones who prepare the issues summaries, including a voter recommendation, for the lawmaker.
- **Strength in numbers.** Take advantage of “strength in numbers.” This is true for letters, faxes, e-mail, phone calls, office visits, financial support, etc. Many issues are decided on the volume of communication received.
- **Know your issue.** Remember the more responsibility and involvement you assume, the more vigorous the commitment and support you can expect from your lawmaker.
- **Remember important information.** Always include Bill numbers, your name, address and phone number (home and office) on all communication. You want your lawmaker to contact you for appropriate follow-up and it reminds them that *YOU* are a constituent.
- **Make a commitment to your cause.** Follow-up with letters, calls, etc.
- **You win some, you lose some.** Be a good winner and loser. Your adversary on one issue might be your ally on the next issue.

- **Be patient.** Sometimes neither you nor the lawmaker will know the outcomes for months.
- **Ask lawmakers to state their position.** If it agrees with yours, ask what you can do to strengthen that support. If it differs with yours, ask what information or show public support is necessary to change that position. If they are undecided, ask what information and public support you can provide to help with the decision making.
- **Use the media.** Use letters to the editor, guest editorials, news stories, etc. to help create public support for your positions. Lawmakers are constantly looking to see what “the people want” on issues.
- **Thank your lawmaker,** no matter what the outcome of your issue. A thank you phone call, note or personal visit goes a long way.

► Don'ts to Remember

- **Don't confuse the issues.** Two or three issues are about as much as you should cover in one letter, call, visit, etc.
- **Don't use form letters.** They are not taken seriously and interpreted as the action of a single person rather than as broad support.
- **Don't underestimate the weight given to letters an phone calls.**
- **Don't contact a lawmaker then drop the issue.** Persistence pays off.
- **Don't say you're contacting your lawmaker because your organization told you to do so.** Lawmakers respond to people (voters) not organizations.
- **Don't ignore opportunities to visit with your lawmaker at home.**
- **Don't lie, ever!** Anything less than full honesty will erode your lawmakers ability to commit to you and your issue. If there are some rough spots, acknowledge them early and work on avoidance strategy together with your lawmaker.
- **DON'T forget that you and your lawmaker need each other.**

► More Successful Lobbying Tips

- **Be courteous.** Members of the legislature are human and expect common courtesy. Plus, they may (and usually will) be more helpful if you treat them with respect. If you are appearing before a legislative committee, be sure to use the appropriate protocol:
 - If you are presenting testimony, begin your address as follows:
“Mr. or Madame Chairman and members of the committee”
 - If you are responding to a question from a member of the committee you must always proceed through the chairman:
“Mr. or Madame Chairman and Representative or Senator”
- **Be Brief.** Keep your committee testimony short and to the point. If you are meeting in a lawmaker’s office, get in and out quickly. Show that you know how valuable a legislator’s time is.
- **Get to the point.** Don’t beat around the bush. Keep embellishments to a minimum.
- **Keep your group small.** An unwieldy group of people can make everyone uncomfortable, distract from your message, and waste valuable time getting set up or presenting your testimony to committee.
- **Plan your pitch.** Make sure that a great deal of consideration goes into your position. Develop, rework and refine your stance in advance, not in front of the lawmaker or committee you want to impress.
- **Practice! Practice! Practice!** Repeat your presentation over and over until it is a work of art. Nothing is more impressive to a lawmaker than a smooth and professional presentation. Nothing is less impressive than to go in unprepared and tumble through your case. Always try to anticipate and prepare for questions from your legislators.
- **Don’t forget to close.** Always ask for the lawmaker’s or committee’s support. Remember, that is what you went there for.



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*Helpful
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