


# HOW TO LOBBY YOUR LEGISLATOR

obbying to convince any individual of the merits of your position requires an understanding of the rationale that supports that belief. Your goal is not to threaten or antagonize, but to influence on the basis of your knowledge and understanding of the issues.

## **Be Prepared —Before You Lobby, Do Your Homework**

### ***Know Yourself***

Be aware of your own personal prejudices or biases. Such knowledge will enable you to maintain objectivity by anticipating your own response in a given situation.

### ***Know Your Organization***

If you are speaking on its behalf, you will want to be a credible representative. Be fully aware of your organization's positions and their development as well as the relationship it maintains with other organizations and with the legislature.

### ***Know Your Legislator***

Make an attempt to understand the basis for your legislator's positions which may include his or her:

- record on related legislation and/or votes (be aware of any prior favorable commitment to your cause);
- party, position, and tenure in legislative and political power structure;
- constituent pressures;
- general predispositions;
- responsiveness to various kinds of personal interviews (sensitivity to legislative attitudes about approach is essential).

Your appearance as an objective individual, able to deal sympathetically with the concerns of both sides, will be enhanced.

### ***Know Your Issue***

Phrase the argument in your own words. Don't be surprised if it appears you are more knowledgeable than the individual you are lobbying. No one can be expected to address every question or matter of concern regarding an issue, however so don't hesitate to admit your lack of knowledge on a particular point. Be willing to pursue the answer and report back.

### ***Know Your Opposition***

It is preferable to anticipate the opposition and answer their arguments positively before those arguments surface publicly.

## **Effective Individual Communication**

*Your maximum influence comes in addressing your comments directly to your own legislator.*

### ***The Personal Visit***

Perhaps the most effective method of transmitting your message, a personal visit allows both of you to connect names with faces. In communication afterward, you will have established yourself as a known concerned constituent. If your legislator is holding a hearing or workshop, try to attend. It is a good time to meet your legislator informally.

If your representative is not available, ask to meet the legislative assistant. S/he can generally be expected to be at least as well informed as your representative, and may have more influence than you suspect.

### ***The Telephone***

The telephone can be an effective tool. Remind the legislator of any previous contact. If the member is not available, speak with the legislative assistant.

