

TIPS FOR LOBBYING



- **Come prepared.** Everyone should know what role they are playing. Set out a clear agenda for you and your colleagues. Before the meeting, provide a set of materials for the legislator and the staff. Have a crisp order of speakers, especially for introductions. Assign roles like notetaker, timekeeper, and the “asker.” A great time to figure this out with your state group is during the training on Monday evening!
- **Identify everyone in the meeting.** It is important for the legislator or staffer to know exactly who you represent, where your organization is based, and how many members your group has. Be sure to point out which advocates are constituents of the legislator. Be as concise as possible.
- **Know how much time you have for the meeting.** Acknowledge how busy Congressional offices are during session. If you can cover the issues in less time than scheduled, say thanks and wrap up - resist the temptation to ramble and fill time. Don't raise separate issues, 'because we have some extra time.' Legislators and staffers deeply appreciate concise meetings that only take as long as they need to.
- **Make a personal connection.** After introductions, ask, “can you tell us a little about your background?” Ideally, find an issue you agree on with the office and thank them for their leadership on it. Be personable but don't chit-chat - move to the substance.
- **Be a resource.** Know the issues, know the leaders and Committees your legislation will be directed to, and know who your allies and opponents are. Be aware of where it is in the legislative process, and what the bill numbers are (HR and S). All of this information can be found in the Advocacy Day App!
- **Say what you know.** Stick to the facts. There is no faster way to lose your credibility than to give false or misleading information to a legislator. If you don't know the answer to a question, acknowledge it and offer to get the facts and get back to the legislator and their staff.
- **Prepare your talking points in advance** and don't read verbatim from a script. There's no faster way to make a staffer turn their attention to their emails than reading to them and breaking eye contact. All of the one-pagers and FAQs about the issue will be available for you to review about a week before Advocacy Day.

TIPS FOR LOBBYING



- **Be specific, direct, and emphasize the “ask.”** Staffers want to know what you want - not only do they appreciate clear and direct asks, but they also find meetings without them to be a waste of time. Remind yourself of the meeting's purpose and emphasize your “ask.” Do you want the legislator to increase funding for a program in the budget? Sponsor a bill? Vote a certain way? Speak to the Assembly Speaker or Senate Majority Leader? Make sure you ask in a clear, direct manner. Open with a broad characterization of the asks (there's legislation we'd love your support on) and close with any specific actions (please talk to the Committee Chair or Leadership above moving this forward). Don't try to remember the staffer's responses to your requests. Keep a written record. Detailed notes will be invaluable later on.
- **Be assertive, but don't argue.** If there is resistance from the legislator/staff, take note of that and report back-this provides valuable insight for the larger movement. Be polite, but don't be shy about the fact that these issues are important to their constituents and their state. Use the phrasing “I understand AND...”, never “BUT”.
- **Make YOUR argument.** Don't raise your opponents' arguments for them, do not accept their framing or their terms. Stick to your best arguments in support of your goals. Do be prepared to respond to opponents' arguments if raised by the staff or legislator.
- **Keep the meeting moving and on the rails.** You asked for the meeting, and you are the one with the agenda, so make sure to kick the meeting off. Work hard not to talk over your colleagues, the legislator, or Hill staff. Stay present and attentive to the whole room. The meeting should start as soon as the office is ready.
- **Email briefing materials to legislative staff** about an hour before the call, and right after the call - they'll appreciate having them at the top of their inbox. After the meeting, send a thank you note to the legislator and/or their staff. The note should memorialize the commitments you extracted in the meeting. Follow up after an appropriate interval to find out if your legislator did what they committed to do. It's also important for you to follow through on the commitments you made.