

Lobbying: Best Practices for Meeting with Legislators

Meetings with Legislative Staff

Lobbying is a vital aspect of advocacy, enabling individuals and organizations to influence the legislative process and drive policy change. Lobby meetings with legislative staff play a crucial role in conveying your message, building relationships, and advancing your cause.

Setting the Stage: Schedule a meeting with the legislator's staff to discuss your concerns or propose a policy change. Be concise about your objective and request a specific amount of time- usually 15 – 30 minutes.

Preparation Is Key: Research the staff member's background, their role, and their legislator's stance on the issue. Prepare a succinct and compelling message that clearly outlines your ask.

Know Your Talking Points: Be ready to present your key talking points, including facts, data, and personal stories that support your position. Craft a persuasive narrative that resonates with their values. Consider crafting a general “elevator pitch” about the League and rehearsing it, so that you are always ready to share a brief introduction on the League’s work and get your audience interested in learning more.

Building Relationships: Engage in active listening, ask questions, and express genuine interest in their perspective. Building a rapport can establish trust and lead to continued dialogue.

Tracking Interactions with Decision-makers

It is important to track your interactions with decision-makers. This will allow you to maintain a record of responsive and appropriate points of contact, any intel gleaned, ways you might work together in the future, etc. If you don't have specific software to do this, you can create and maintain a spreadsheet.

Suggested information:

- Legislator’s office/group
- Point of contact (e.g. their title, email address)
- Subject(s) discussed
- Date of interaction
- League member(s) who had interaction
- Any intel you gleaned about an office’s priorities, positions, hesitations, etc.
- Follow-up e.g. email sent and/or materials left or sent
 - Remember, following up via email is a great way to help the office maintain a record of your work together. If you later email the office again under the same email thread, it will help them easily distinguish the interactions that you’ve had and the content you’ve covered.

Conclusion:

Effective lobbying is integral to advocating for change. By mastering these skills and tailoring your approach to different settings, you can maximize your influence and contribute to meaningful policy outcomes. Remember, every effort counts, and your advocacy can make a lasting impact on the legislative process.