

## LOBBYING IS NOT A DIRTY WORD!

Everyone lobbies—you do it every day with your family, friends and neighbors.

### LOBBYING IS:

- Being an advocate for an issue, letting officials know that you feel strongly about a particular issue.
- Attempting to convince others of the validity of your viewpoint.
- Finding the right people to implement your position, such as local, state, or national government officials and legislators.
- Understanding human nature and having a sense of humor and an enthusiasm for your issue.

### TIPS FOR LOBBYING TO INFLUENCE LEGISLATION

#### 1. KNOW YOUR ISSUE

Be prepared by knowing the facts.

Do your homework and learn the necessary background information. Know the legislator's or government official's stand on your issue. Where does their constituency stand? What other special interest groups will be contacting them (party leadership, colleagues, other organizations, lobbyists)?

#### 2. BE HONEST

Be honest and accurate. You expect the same from the government official. You are building a foundation for a good relationship, so integrity must be the corner-stone. Do not let your emotional involvement in the issue cloud your facts.

#### 3. PLAN FOR CONTACT

Make an appointment. A face-to-face meeting is preferable. This is a meeting of equals: concerned citizens and government officials. Legislators need to hear from their constituents. You may want to take 2 or 3 allies (no more) with you.

#### 4. BE BUSINESSLIKE

Set the tone of the meeting. Be friendly and have your "opener" planned. Be brief: limit issues and be focused in your goal for this meeting. Ask good questions that have been prepared in advance. Avoid taking notes during the meeting; write them immediately afterward. Know the pertinent information, such as bill number, title and description. If you have a fact sheet, keep it short and to the point. Be courteous and maintain confidentiality.

#### 5. IDENTIFY THE OPPOSITION

Find out who opposes your stand. If the legislator or official opposes your position, find out why but do not argue! Be sympathetic to their particular situation. Try to avoid a completely negative response.

Leave an opportunity for you to return another time. Make an attempt to get the official to make a commitment without pushing him into a corner—you do not want to lose a good working relationship.

#### 6. LISTEN CAREFULLY

Glean as much information as possible from what the legislator or official tells you about your issue. Who are the people working for or against your position? What are their concerns?

#### 7. BE POSITIVE

Do not speak in negative terms. If you do not have an answer to a question, say so, and offer to find the answer. If you promise to follow up, keep that promise. Thank the legislator/official for meeting with you. Thank them for their support once you have gained it.

#### 8. DO NOT BE DISCOURAGED

Do not give up! Be persistent: some issues take longer to accomplish than others. Get to know the legislator's or official's staff. Join forces with other like-minded people. You may want to start a community campaign.

#### 9. MAINTAIN A GOOD WORKING RELATIONSHIP

Keep the door open and remain on friendly terms. This may not be the only time you will want to contact this person. You may not gain their support this time but might seek it on another issue in the future.

#### 10. WRITE A NOTE OF THANKS FOLLOWING THE MEETING

**CONTACTS FROM HOME:** If you cannot possibly arrange a face-to-face meeting, do not give up!

### **CALL YOUR LEGISLATORS**

#### **1) Be prepared**

- Have the pertinent information written down: essential points of your position, bill number, title and description.
- Try to place call at crucial time for issue, e.g., before a key vote.
- Use correct form of address, e.g., Senator Smith, not Joe.

#### **2) Present your position briefly**

- Identify yourself and where you live.
- One issue per call.
- Be factual and honest.
- Use your own words.
- Mention how issue will affect their district or community.

#### **3) Ask for their views**

- Try to ascertain their position and how they will vote.
- Keep tone friendly.

#### **4) End the conversation politely**

- Thank the officials.
- Offer to send information on your issue.

**Note:** If you cannot reach your legislator or official, do not refuse to speak with a staff person. You may gain useful information and a helpful source for future reference.

### **WRITE, FAX OR E-MAIL YOUR LEGISLATORS**

- 1) Use plain or personal stationery.
- 2) Use proper form of address.
- 3) Write legibly.
- 4) Keep it short and to the point. Let them know what you expect.
- 5) Address on issue per communication.
- 6) Outline essential information: bill number, title and description.
- 7) Use your own words. Avoid form letters. Describe personal experiences and local impact.
- 8) Be sure to include your name, address, phone number, or e-mail.

### **REMEMBER:**

#### **BE PERSISTENT**

Don't give up! A good cause is worth the extra effort and the wait.

#### **BE POSITIVE**

Don't contact your legislator or government official just to complain. Let them know you support them when they have done a good job. Be polite: say "thank you."

#### **BE A PART OF THE PROCESS**

Don't stop with one issue. Keep an ongoing dialogue with your government. Keep working for a better world!

**PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CALL UPON THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF CONNECTICUT. THERE ARE OTHER PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE THAT MAY BE USEFUL TO YOU.**

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**MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD!**

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# **THE ART OF ADVOCACY**

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