
Being an Effective Grassroots Lobbyist for Your Business

Last Updated Saturday, 28 April 2007

1. Personal Letters—hand written, ask for response—never use form letters

2. Make Personal Visits—

a. Know Who You are Talking To—learn something about the elected official whom you are visiting. Biographical information is available in federal and state directories and on the Internet.

b. Be on Time—elected officials and their staff are busy—early is on time and on time is too late.

c. Be Prepared—work out what you plan to say before walking into the office. Organize your comments. Use an outline if that is helpful. If you a part of a group divide up topics and let different people explain separate concerns.

d. Be Brief and Concise—expect them to remember two or three major points, so focus on getting just those limited points across. After you have shared your concerns, briefly reiterate any important details.

e. Just the Facts—Provide them with specific information that is factual and informative. If they ask questions and you do not know the answer, tell them you will find out and get back to them.

f. Ask Questions—ask questions, such as whether they have heard about the issues you are interested in, whether they have a position on the issue, and whether they are familiar with your business or industry.

g. Be Polite—Do not be hostile or insulting, even if the person with whom you are talking with appears hostile or uninterested. Being courteous never hurts and it is usually very important in establishing a positive relationship.

h. Be a Constituent—establish the constituent link. If you have businesses, employees, or customers in their district, let them know. Elected officials will be more responsive when you or your company has a presence in their

district.

i. Ask for something—such as support for your position, sponsoring or cosponsoring a bill, or a commitment not to vote for burdensome legislation.

j. Ask them to contact you for your views on issues of particular concern to you and your business.

k. Follow up—Send a thank-you note to everyone you meet with, even if they seemed disinterested. Try to provide them with some additional information. Also, remind them if they made a commitment (e.g., they would sponsor or co-sponsor a bill).

3. Phone Calls—talk with a staff member (make sure you get their name or names) and let them know you would like to hear back on this issue. Have employees call using cell phones (different phone numbers will not give the appearance of a phone bank or the same person calling). Provide talking points—practice your presentation.

4. Petitions—Issue based, minimum 100 signatures, hand written, name, address, and phone number of group and each signer—take it with you on personal office visits.

5. Letters to the Editor—Purposes—thank elected officials for support; give them reasons to support your position, inform, or to reprimand for beginning on the wrong side of the issue. Send to every paper in district (daily and weekly papers). Send a copy of the letter to elected official as a courtesy and where it was sent. Have associates send similar letters but not the same to the different newspapers.

6. Editorial Board—usually a person or small group of influential business/community leaders should ask to meet with the board to explain your group’s position on the issue. One person to speak on behalf of the group.

7. Press Releases—when your business or trade group has news or takes a

position on regulations or legislation send out a press release.

8. New Conferences—needs to be at least 25 people gathered to tell your story. Smaller the room the bigger the group appears. Works best in a venue where the press is already gathered, i.e., capitol, legislative building, etc.