



10 Tips for Effective Lobbying

- 1. Remember the “Golden Rule”**

Legislators are human beings too, and are offended by personal attacks just like anyone else. Treating them with the courtesy, dignity and respect that you would like to receive focuses the conversation on the matter at hand and leaves a positive impression of you and your cause.
- 2. Perfect your pitch**

Preparation breeds confidence, and raw data does little good if you do not have a strategy for how to use it. Just like writing a paper, take some time to lay out your points before arriving at a meeting (and be sure to incorporate facts to support your positions!). Even a simple outline can work wonders keeping your points clear and the conversation on track.
- 3. Keep it brief**

In a passionate appeal, every detail feels critical. Overusing the same talking point or figure can muddle a pitch and lead to tangents and digressions. Try to cut extra details out so that you can deliver your whole point in 60 seconds, including your own introduction, organization, the bill in question and a clear request for support.
- 4. Respect everyone’s time**

Legislators are exceedingly busy, and it is important to respect that they are doing their best to adhere to a schedule. Try your best to limit small talk so that you can maximize the time you have to make your pitch. Relatedly, make a conscious effort to share the floor with your fellow attendees, as well as the legislator. Bringing in several perspectives stimulates richer conversation, and will help all parties get the most out of the experience.
- 5. It’s okay to say, “I don’t know”**

Legislators are inquisitive people, and if you make a compelling case, they will undoubtedly have follow up questions. If you do not know an answer, do not try to fudge your response. Saying, “I don’t know” and offering to find an answer later is not only appropriate, it opens up an avenue to continue the conversation after the meeting concludes.
- 6. Be ready for anything**

The Capitol is a busy place and even the best laid plans will sometimes go awry. Even if you have an appointment, be prepared to have to wait on a legislator being pulled away to a short-notice caucus session or needing to appear on the floor. Being on time and remaining polite with members and their staff makes adapting to changing circumstances far easier.
- 7. Legislators will leave the floor for constituents**

In the event that you could not schedule an appointment, or that a legislator has to cancel/delay due to floor activity, you may still be able to see them. You can approach the House or Senate entrances (on opposite sides of the third floor of the Capitol), write your legislator’s name on the back of a piece of paper or business card, and ask the attendant to find them on the floor. They will often meet you at the door, allowing you a few minutes to state your case.
- 8. Know your audience**

Legislators hold a variety of opinions, and each has a different record of accomplishment. Demanding to know why a strong advocate for your cause has not “done more” not only shows

lack of awareness, it can be counterproductive. Study the track record of your legislator so that you know whether you need to search for common ground, or simply thank them for their work.

9. Be aware

Trying to keep track of everything you need to know in a fast-paced environment can be distracting. Try to listen actively as you and your group interact with legislators. Subtle details can indicate preferences, and subtext can help you find common ground. Being able to pick out points requiring follow-up can also help to initiate a conversation that stretches beyond University of Illinois Day at the Capitol.

10. Always have a reference

We are lucky to have expert assistance at University of Illinois Day at the Capitol. For university related issues and follow up, be sure to refer legislators and aides to Jennifer Creasey, director of state government relations for the University of Illinois, or ask them to reach out to Illinois Connection at illinoisconnection@uillinois.edu.