



Tips for Citizen Lobbyists

REMEMBER FOUR THINGS:

- Legislators are both people and public servants. Most started as citizen advocates or community activists, and see their role as elected leaders as an extension of that work. State legislators spend three months living in Annapolis, making sacrifices to their family and careers. They are also probably not subject matter experts in your topic.
- Legislative Aides are both gatekeepers and guides. They are the voices that their bosses listen to the most often, and they can be your best advocates to make the decisions you are hoping for. Making them your friends and allies can be the difference between success and failure of an ask.
- Citizen Lobbyists are critical to the process. You are the ones with the stories of how legislation will impact “real” people in their districts, giving them essential information that they would not otherwise have. They are only in their positions because they were elected to be there by you and people just like you. Change, however slowly it happens, can not happen without you.
- Your job is not to change their minds. Your job is to provide information and the space for them to change their own minds.

TIPS FOR GOOD LEGISLATIVE VISITS

- Be a Good Human. Whether you are talking with a legislator or an aide, treat them as people, not as abstractions. Be polite and respectful.
- Always tell the truth. Even if you think others don't. If you provide false information, you have broken their trust in you and undermined your cause.
- Don't assume positions. Assume positive intent. You don't know what other parts of their lives you may not know about that influences their positions. People will surprise you.
- Be prepared to be brief. You may only have five minutes of their time. Make it count.
- Keep the tone positive. Even if you think others don't. Legislators want to believe they are fighting for something because it's good, not because others are bad..
- Always make an ask before leaving. They want to know what you want from them, so be sure to tell them. If you don't have an ask, you should evaluate whether or not you need the meeting.
- Listen closely to what they are saying. And listen, too, for what they are NOT saying, and what questions they may side-step.



- Make a plan for the meeting. Know who is going to say what, and who will be making the ask. The general outline for a meeting should include:
 - Introductions of all participants and their affiliations, especially if they are in-district
 - Why the issue is important to you personally,
 - The ask,
 - Review of any follow-up needed and who they should expect to hear from
 - Close with thanks for the meeting.
- Don't snub the aides. Meeting with legislative aides can be just as good as a meeting with the legislator.
- Follow up. Send them a message thanking them for the meeting, provide any information you offered to follow up.