

Lobbying Tips - Advocacy 101

TIPS ON MEETING A MEMBER OF LEGISLATURE OR A MEMBER OF THE STAFF

A personal visit with your state Senator or Representative is an effective way to emphasize your interest in an issue or bill. Some tips for meeting a Legislator to urge support or opposition to legislation:

- When making an appointment, state the subject to be discussed and identify persons who will attend, make sure to note that you are a constituents.
 - Know the facts, both legislatively and related to your position. If discussing a bill, know the number and title: (please do not hesitate to call Dan if you have questions)
 - Present the facts in an orderly, concise, positive manner. Stay on the issue.
 - Relate the positive impact of legislation you support and the problems it corrects. If you are affected personally, tell them your story and how an issue will impact you.
 - Relate the negative impact of legislation you oppose and the problems it would create.
 - Leave fact sheets if possible.
 - Encourage questions. Be prepared to discuss.
 - Ask for favorable consideration and thank the legislator for his/her time.
 - Be sure to get the name of the staff member covering your issue.
 - Follow up with a note of thanks.
- You may end up meeting with a staff member instead of the Legislator, the staffer will convey your message to the Legislator.
- Finally, please let Dan and Lorrell know if you made contact with your Senator or Representative.

TIPS ON WRITING TO A STATE LEGISLATOR

- Try to stick to one typewritten page, two pages at most. Don't write on the back of a page. If writing longhand, take care to write legibly.
- Use your own words and your own stationery. A personal letter is better than a form letter.
- In a short first paragraph, state your purpose. Stick with one subject or issue. Support your position with the rest of the letter.
- If a bill is the subject, cite it by both name and number. Try not to use acronyms or clichés.
- Be factual and support your position with information about how legislation is likely to affect you and others. Avoid emotional, philosophical arguments.
- If you believe that legislation is wrong and should be opposed, say so. Indicate the likely adverse effects and suggest a better approach.
- Ask the legislator's views, but do not demand support. Remember that the Senator and Representative respond to a variety of views, and even if your position is not supported on one issue or bill now, it may be the next time.
- Be sure to include your address and sign your name legibly. You should also include your telephone number. If you have any family, business, or political connection in regard to this issue, explain it. It may serve as an identification when your point of view is considered.
- Write also about legislation of which you approve. Legislators hear mostly from constituents who are against something; this gives them a one-sided picture of their constituency. A note of appreciation will make your legislator remember you favorably next time you write.
- Write early in the session before a bill has been introduced if you have some ideas that you would like to see included in legislation. If you are "lobbying" for or against a bill and your legislator is a member of the Committee to which it has been referred, write when the Committee begins hearings. If your legislator is not a member of the Committee handling the bill, write just before the bill is scheduled to come to the floor for debate and vote.
- Write the Chairperson or members of a Committee holding hearings on legislation in which you are interested. However, remember that you have more influence with legislators from your own district than any others.

The suggested address and style is:

The Honorable _____
Florida Senate
404 South Monroe Street Tallahassee,
Florida 32399-1100

Dear Senator _____

- OR -

The Honorable _____
House of Representatives
402 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300

Dear Representative _____