

SUGGESTIONS FOR PARTICIPATION

General Description

Government relations, also known as lobbying, consists of individuals and organizations engaged in promoting the interests of their employers or clients. Their activities involve monitoring legislative and executive activities to influence policy, legislation, regulations, or negotiations, on behalf of governments, industries, specific companies, interest groups, or constituencies. In Washington, DC, lobbying is regulated by law, calling for disclosure by lobbyists of organizations or clients they represent, LDA (Lobbying Disclosure Act) or FARA (Foreign Agents Registration Act).

In addition, lobbying may also be carried out by PACs (Political Action Committees) that represent specific constituencies or may simply represent themselves on stated issues. Lastly, there is a subdivision of Executive Branch Legislative Offices that represents various departments and agencies of the Executive Branch of the U.S. Government, charged with the purpose of influencing the Congressional Branch on legislative affairs.

It is important in a democracy that we do our part to help keep their legislators informed. In order to be true representatives of the people, legislators need to know the thinking of their constituents on those issues upon which decisions will be made, and the facts on which such thinking and conclusions are based. As a citizen, *you* can help ensure good legislation on the state and national levels by communicating with your elected representatives at the proper time.

Too many people never have any contact with those who represent them in government whose vote may decide what price they will pay for the acts of government, sometimes in terms of dollars, or in changes to standards of living, or in regulatory inconveniences.

Is There a Bill or an Issue of Particular Concern to You? Organize!

Forming a group to lobby for or against legislation is often more effective than individual efforts. A group is far more visible, has greater resources, and carries more political weight.

Organize a group of friends, co-workers, or neighbors around a specific issue of concern to all of you. Define your goals . . . identify tasks that are part of the plan . . . divide the work. (For instance, one person can research available material, another can keep track of the bill, several can attend all committee meetings, several can personally meet with the legislator, etc.) . . . **STAY INFORMED.**

It is best for the group to meet informally or socially withr gg4 eg find out how a bill becomes a law . . . learn the con
ators are dealing with your area of concern . . . find out when and how to lobby.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL INTERACTIONS WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS

If you are interested in becoming actively involved in influencing legislation, here are some important points that will make your lobbying efforts more effective:

Personal Contacts

Personal contacts can be a meaningful way to influence a legislator.

1. Before contacting any legislators, take the time to read all available background material on the bill or issue which concerns you. Although it is obviously beneficial for you to know a great deal about the specifics of bills and issues, it is not essential that you know everything. The primary goal of your visit is to express your concern over a particular bill or issue.
2. Know when and where to contact a legislator. The best times to find a legislator in the office in Carson City are Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

It is usually possible, when the House and Senate are in session, to send a message to legislators informing them that you wish to speak with them. Check in with the information desk or call ahead to see if the legislator you wish to meet with is in the office.

It is generally, but *not always*, possible for a legislator to come out to meet briefly with you.

7. When you introduce yourself, save time by making it clear who you are and what organization, if any, you mention it and the fact that the home district group may also be trying to reach the legislator.

Legislators have many demands on their time. An elaborate sales job or long, emotional speech will not be appreciated. They do, however, want your well-prepared facts and views, presented in a straightforward manner. Make sure their time is well spent in talking to you. Stick to the issues that you

9. It is easy, particularly when dealing with legislators who disagree with you, to become angry and frustrated.

If you disagree, a calm, reasonable attitude and a set of well-prepared reasons for your position may change their minds on the issue. It is generally advisable not to get into arguments which may trigger prejudices. Remember, you may not have all the facts on an issue or bill. Let legislators explain their views listen without interrupting they often have input from many resources to which you may not have access, such as fiscal agencies, state departments, other groups with expertise on the issue, and legislation from other states. Take a few notes about their comments, noting any questions they have. Give the answers you know, and offer to get answers to the other questions, if possible. Understanding their views of the facts and where they come from will help your organization develop counterarguments.

10. Do not make promises or threats before the facts are in or make threats. Give your legislator a fair chance to examine all sides of an issue. The legislative process is very complex, and bills change their shape in committee and on the floor of both chambers of the Legislature. A bill rarely becomes law in the same form as introduced. It is possible that the bill you supported originally is so changed in the process that you would oppose its final form. Don't promise rewards, and don't insult the opposition.

A legislator may be forced to vote on a complex bill as a whole, weighing the good with the bad and the needs of all constituents and/or the state as a whole, rather than those of a particular group or individual.

Letter Writing and E-Mail

A personal letter or message via e-mail or the Internet may be the most effective way of contacting your legislator.

E-mail is the preferred method of communication. Most legislators prefer e-mail because it is faster, and more convenient to respond to and track. If writing by e-mail, use your home or personal e-mail account and be sure to include your home address so the legislator knows you are a constituent.

effective:

ADDRESS IT PROPERLY

addresses, see individual lists. Examples:

FOR THE GOVERNOR:

Office of the Governor
State Capitol Building
101 N. Carson Street
Carson City, NV 89701

Dear Governor (last name):

Message text...

FOR A STATE SENATOR:

The Honorable (full name) State Senator
(if to President, use President of the Senate)
[if legislature not in session]: Interim address
[if in session] State Capitol (room number)
Carson City, Nevada 89701

Dear Senator (last name):

Message text...

FOR A STATE REPRESENTATIVE:

The Honorable (full name)
State Representative (if to Speaker, use Speaker of the House)
[if legislature not in session] Interim address
[if in session] State Capitol (room number)
Carson City, Nevada 89701

Dear Representative (last name):

Message text...

For a U.S. Representative:

The Honorable (full name)
U.S. House of Representatives
(room number) House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative (last name):

Message text...

For a U.S. Senator:

The Honorable (full name)
U.S. Senate
(room number) Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator (last name):

Message text...

Dear Senator (last name): Dear Representative (last name):

STATE SENATOR STATE REPRESENTATIVE:

The Honorable (full name) The Honorable (full name)

State Senator State Representative

State Capitol State Capitol

P.O. Box 30036 P.O. Box 30014

Lansing, MI 48909-7536 Lansing, MI 48909-7514

Dear Senator (last name): Dear Representative (last name):

USE YOUR OWN WORDS. Avoid form letters and petitions. They tend to be identified as organized

few days on every conceivable subject tends to become a nuisance, rather than an effective voice of concern.

YOU MAY NOT ALWAYS RECEIVE A LONG, DETAILED RESPONSE. Legislators are very busy and usually cannot respond with long, personal replies to each correspondent.

WRITE TO EXPRESS APPRECIATION when you feel a legislator has done a good job. Legislators are human