THE ABC'S OF HOW TO LOBBY

Ask for Support

- *Know your objective.* The purpose of the meeting is to gain the legislator's support and commitment to vote for your position on the issue.
- *Personalize the request.* Face-to-face meetings are one of the best ways to communicate. Make certain the legislator understands you are there to demonstrate that this issue affects his or her constituency.

Be Brief…and Prepared

- *Respect the legislator's time constraints.* You will probably only have a 15 to 20 minute meeting. Be on time and be prepared to make your points quickly and get your message across in 5 to 7 minutes.
- *Make your points concisely and coherently.* When possible provide bill numbers and titles.
- *Be knowledgeable about the issue.* Know the facts and what the opposition is saying.
- *Emphasize how the issue affects you.* Explain the impact on your business, your employees, and your community.
- *Do not guess.* If you are unsure about the answer to a question, offer to follow up with more information.
- *Leave a fact sheet* with the legislator that summarizes the issue.

Close the Deal

- *Be persuasive.* Present your viewpoint politely but convincingly. Speak concisely and with commitment. Stress the positive impact of the legislation you support and relate the negative impact of opposing the legislation.
- *Be firm.* Find out where your legislator stands on the issue. Ask what position and what action he or she will take. If the legislator does not yet have a position, ask when you can expect an answer.
- *Listen carefully.* Hear what the legislator says regarding his or her concerns and position. Unless you hear, "I am with you." Do not count on the legislator's vote.
- *Follow up.* Always send a thank you letter for the meeting. Include a brief summary of your position and any new information you may have.

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TWELVE STEPS FOR AN EFFECTIVE CONGRESSIONAL MEETING

1. **Introduce yourself** and tell the elected official or their staff person who you are representing. Be certain to describe your operations, the location(s) and the number of employees and let them know of any special connections you may have with the legislator.
2. **Start with a compliment**. If the Member is to receive an award, here is where you present it and thank them for their past support. If you voted for them, this is where you may want to tell them that. At the very least thank them for taking the time to meet with you.
3. **Take the initiative** and **state clearly** and **concisely** what **issues** you want to discuss, what your position is and follow this with facts about why he or she should take your position.
4. **Stress how the issue affects the member's district or state**. If possible **tell a personal story** which highlights your experience with the issues and why you care about it.
5. **Give the legislator a brief fact sheet which outlines your position**.

6. **Mention** any **other** organizations, important individuals, government officials, and legislators that **support** your position.
7. **Be a good listener**. After you make your pitch, allow the member to respond. Be sure to bring the conversation back to the issue at hand if the conversation veers off in another direction or the member attempts to evade the issue.
8. **Answer any questions** to the best of your ability, but if you are unable to answer, admit it. Offer to follow-up with the information and do so promptly.
9. **Ask a direct question** to which the legislator can respond "yes", such as, "can we count on your support? Press politely for a commitment unless the member is clearly opposed to your position or to making a commitment.
10. **Always thank the member for his or her time** at the end of the meeting, even if she or he did not agree with your position.
11. **Immediately** after the meeting, **record** any **information** regarding the member's position or views.
12. **Always follow-up with a prompt thank you letter**.

DO'S AND DON'TS OF COMMUNICATING WITH MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

DO'S

- **Do** communicate clearly the subject or subjects in which you are interested.
- **Do** state why you are concerned about an issue or issues. Personalize the issue if you can.
- **Do** restrict the number of issues you discuss. Concentrate your arguments.
- **Do** put your thoughts in your own words. Be yourself.
- **Do** use the meeting to begin to establish a relationship with your Member of Congress if you don't already have one. In general, you will have more influence as a constituent.
- **Do** find out what committees and subcommittees your Representative or Senators serve on. Members of Congress have more influence over legislation within their committees' and subcommittees' jurisdiction.

DON'TS

- **Don't** ever threaten. Don't even hint "I'll never vote for you unless you do what I want." Present your case and ask for consideration.
- **Don't** drone on about an issue or anything else. Time is the most precious commodity any of us have. Use your time with the member or staff wisely.
- **Don't** pretend to wield vast political influence.
- **Don't** be condescending if you are meeting with staff. Staff members often hold strong sway with the Member of Congress they serve.
- **Don't** lie or exaggerate.