

# EFFECTIVE LOBBYING

As a lobbyist, you provide an extremely important informational service to legislators and their staff. Lobbying provides legislators and their staff direct contact with their community and the opinions of their constituents. **Remember.** Your legislators have as much reason to see you as you have to see them. Here are some helpful suggestions for effective lobbying:

1. Formulate a few central points that you want to make during your meeting with the legislator, but not too many of them.
2. Form lobbying teams consisting of a leader, a reporter and an expediter.

The *leader* is the person who sets the tone of the meeting. The leader establishes a rapport with the legislator. *He or she is friendly and courteous, and never shows hostility even to an obviously unsympathetic politician.* The leader discusses the issues with the legislator, as objectively as possible, sometimes rewording and interpreting as necessary.

*The reporter is a listener.* After greeting the legislator and/or his or her staff, the reporter keeps in the background. The reporter concentrates on being perceptive and remembering as much as possible. *It is recommended that the reporter not take notes during the interview, because a flying pencil often inhibits free discussion.* The reporter listens not only to what is being said; but also looks for what else is implied.

*The expediter* has either a big job or a small one depending upon how the conversation is going. If the meeting veers off topic, the expediter can courteously interrupt with phrases like “You said a moment ago that...” or “Did you mean...” *The expediter keeps the meeting moving,* and could signal its change of pace or termination. *Warning: The expediter does not stifle a discussion that is providing some insights even though it is off the track. He or she does keep the conversation from meandering fruitlessly.*

### 3. During the lobbying visit.

- Know the facts and always have written materials to leave.
- Get your point of view across in the fewest possible words.
- Do not be afraid to admit that you don’t know an answer and never make up answers.
- Find out the answer after the visit and report back to the legislator.
- Leave on a friendly note, even if the meeting didn’t go as well as you had hoped. If you have a good rapport with a legislator, ask for his or her advice or assistance in reaching out to other legislators.
- Be sure to thank the legislator for taking the time out of his or her busy schedule to meet with you even if he or she does not support your position.
- Always leave the door open for another visit.

- Immediately after the visit the team should discuss the meeting and develop a written record of the visit and forward it to the Legislative and Political Department at NYSUT.
- Send follow-up letter(s) to the legislator(s) thanking them for the visit and re-stating the points you made during the meeting.

#### 4. Some Thou-Shalt-Nots for Successful Lobbying:

- Do not argue with the legislator.
- Do not be late. Be on time and do not prolong the interview beyond the agreed-upon duration.
- Do not do all the talking. Remember you are there to hear the legislator's views as well as to express your own.
- Do not let the legislator interview you.
- Do not attempt to extract rash promises.
- Do not negotiate with the legislator.
- Do not comment on answers, except to clarify your position where it has been misunderstood.
- Do not ask questions that are not germane to your pre-established lobbying points.

#### 5. Explain Your Position

An explanation of how legislation personally affects you and your colleagues is a highly effective form of advocacy. As a union member, a taxpayer, or a consumer, describe in your own words how a bill or amendment will affect you. Do not forget that a bill can change as it moves through the legislative process. Be sure to urge your legislator to oppose crippling amendments or to support strengthening ones.

#### 6. Ask for a Response

Urge your legislator to act in support or opposition to a particular bill, to co-sponsor an amendment or to take whatever legislative action you deem necessary. Feel free to request a written response from the legislator addressing your concerns, but always be courteous.

**Remember:**

- Be Brief
- Be Clear
- Be Polite