



What Influences a Legislator?

Important items to keep in mind when lobbying elected officials

Elected officials are, first and foremost, politicians. If an elected official is up for re-election, they are often more willing to listen to interests outside their norm. The issues of a special interest group are important to them because they need that support to win re-election. One of the easiest and most direct ways to get to know and influence a legislator is to help them; this can be accomplished by volunteering on their campaign. Although assisting a politician does not ensure that they will always vote your way, it allows you to spend time with them and their staff. Building and maintaining working relationships is always important.

The following are important to keep in mind when lobbying elected officials:

The Issue:

- Merits of the issue
- Impact on his/her district
- Possible job loss

Political Considerations:

- Upcoming election/lame duck
- Campaign contributions
- Commitment of an interest group – single issue voters?
- President, Governor, or Mayor
- Scorecards

Legislative Considerations:

- Committee chairman
- Committee assignments
- Trade offs with fellow legislators
- Position of others in state or district delegation
- Lobbying by other legislators
- Staff advice
- Position of Political party

Cost:

- Impact on economy or businesses
- Too much government interference
- Opponents have more clout than proponents
- Lack of knowledge
- Executive branch position

Media:

- News articles/stories
- Editorials
- Letters to the Editor
- Opportunity to gain press attention

Personal:

- Personal experiences and feelings
- Family members, friends, especially children
- Impact on self or others important to legislator
- Alma mater

Outside Influences:

- Constituent contacts – grassroots
- General public sentiment
- Celebrities, sports figures
- Chance encounters with people