



Four Steps to Success in Lobbying

Lobbying is not just done by paid professionals. Meeting with elected officials is fundamental to our democracy. It's your opportunity as a constituent to tell your representatives what is important to you and your community. Don't be intimidated. Use the following steps to make your meetings with your elected officials a success.

1. Schedule Your Visit

- If you're not sure who represents you, you can find your elected officials online at <http://mdelect.net/electedofficials> along with their location, contact information and committee assignments.
- Schedule an appointment by contacting your legislator's office. Make every effort to schedule a meeting with them personally, but appreciatively accept meetings with staff also.
- If possible, leave the number of the cell phone you will have with you on the day of the appointment. Sometimes appointments can change with little notice.
- Make note of the scheduler's name, phone number, with whom you are meeting and the time and place of the meeting. Bring those notes with you.
- If the scheduler is unable to schedule the appointment at the time you call, agree on the time when you should follow up again.

2. Plan Your Message

- Gather any background material that may be useful. Collect visual images of important buildings representative of your area's heritage, and show how preservation programs played a role in their rehabilitation and revitalization.
- Form Alliances. Look beyond natural allies for organizations with related policy goals. If you are part of a group visiting an elected official, it is helpful to plan your use of the time available and discuss in advance what each member of the group will say.
- Understand preservation programs including funding levels and specific beneficiaries of the programs.
- Eliminate jargon. You may know what a SHPO and Section 106 are, but the vast majority of people will not. Everything you say in your message must be clear and understandable to the average person.
- Bring business cards and your organization's brochures.

3. Deliver Your Message

- Be punctual and positive. Be patient if the legislator is late for the meeting or is interrupted by other business.
- Introduce yourself and thank the legislator for his or her time and support on some past or current issue. Be friendly, constructive, and brief throughout the meeting.

- Be respectful and courteous to the staff. The legislator's staff is absolutely critical to the legislative/policy process. Treat him or her just as you would your legislator, not only as a matter of courtesy but because the aid is in a position to advance your cause or sink it without a trace.
- Plan to cover your topic in five minutes if possible, ten minutes at the most. Don't linger unless your legislator chooses to prolong the meeting.
- Clearly articulate the purpose of your visit, focus on your key issues and be concise. Listen to your legislator's views and concerns, and do not react angrily if you do not get the response you want.
- Share personal and local examples of the impact of the issues you came to talk about. Be sure to use specific examples from your state or district.
- If possible, describe for the member how you or your group can be of assistance to him or her. Where it is appropriate, remember to ask for a commitment.
- If you get hit with any questions you can't answer, admit it and provide the answers later. Don't bluff--it always shows.
- Leave materials behind such as a one-sheet on your organization or institution.
- End the visit on a positive note. Thank the elected official for their time and leave your contact information.
- When visiting State, City, or Federal government buildings, allow for time to pass through security. Be prepared to show some form of picture identification, and present briefcases and purses for inspection.

4. Follow-Up

- Say when and how you will be in touch to follow up on your request.
- Send a thank you letter to the legislator or staff person soon after your visit, repeating your "ask." Include any needed follow-up information you said you would get them.
- Think creatively about ways to involve your elected officials in preservation related activities. Invite him or her on a tour, or ask him or her to speak at your conference. Stay connected to them and their staff. Cultivate them as preservation champions.
- Report back to your organization. Whom did you see or talk with? What did you discuss? What was his or her position?
- Continue to foster relationships with you state and federal lawmakers. Build yourself as a resource for your legislators and staff.
- Staff members change frequently. Be sure to stay current. Offer to brief new staff on heritage issues.