

# HOW TO LOBBY

**L** OBBYING IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE MEANS of securing your representative's commitment to your group or coalition's goals and agenda. This guide outlines the five steps of a lobby visit.

## 1 Develop a strategy.

- *Research your representative's positions.* Read about his voting record. Scan local newspapers and political journals. Call his or her office, and ask questions.
- *Develop a strong understanding of your group's relative strength with the office.*
- *Choose your objective,* and make a realistic assessment of the possible responses to your request.
- *Select a diverse delegation.* Sometimes one person is ideal, but a number between two and five is usually best.

## 2 Ask for an appointment.

- *Call the representative's office,* and ask to speak with the appointment secretary or scheduler.
- *Explain the nature of your visit,* name your delegation, and suggest possible days on which to meet.
- *Confirm your request* with a letter that reiterates the date, the topic of discussion, and the names and affiliations of each attendee.
- *Prepare to be flexible* and meet with staff, rather than the representative, due to scheduling conflicts.

### 3 Prepare for the meeting.

- *Assemble information* about the topic of discussion. Ask your group and other organizations to help you.
- *Meet with your delegation beforehand* to make sure everyone understands the desired outcome and agrees on any fallback requests to make in case you fail to attain your objective.
- *Assign one major point to each person*, and appoint a leader who will make sure each point gets covered.

### 4 Conduct the meeting.

- *Dress appropriately.* Be on time. Show proper respect.
- *Introduce each person* by telling who they are, what group they represent, and what their interests are.
- *Start on a positive note* — thank the representative for something.
- *Present the problem.* Be clear. Assume that the representative has no knowledge of the topic. Explain how the problem affects real people.
- *Be straightforward.* Never fear admitting that you do not know an answer. Explain how you can help the representative.
- *Explain what steps* you would like the representative to take in response to the problem.
- *Get the representative talking.* Ask questions that call for specific answers. Try to get a solid commitment.
- *End on a positive note.*

### 5 Follow up.

- *Make sure everyone sends a thank-you note* that highlights the main points of the meeting.
- *Send any information you promised.*
- *Continue to talk* with the office and build the relationship.