

# Have an Impact: Tips for Effective Lobbying

## Scheduling the Meeting

- Call ahead to your legislator's office to arrange an appointment. You can find your legislators' background and telephone numbers on the Wisconsin Legislature website [www.legis.state.wi.us](http://www.legis.state.wi.us).
- Mention that you are a constituent. Ask for a 15 minute meeting and note which legislation you wish to discuss. If your legislator cannot meet with you, ask to meet with a staffer.
- If you are meeting with more than one legislator, schedule the meetings 30 minutes apart.



## Prepare and Plan



- Know as much as possible about the legislator you are trying to influence – party affiliation, committee assignments, and his/her position on the subject of the meeting, if possible. Memorize three key talking points and basic arguments for your position on the legislation.
- If you have a personal story related to the legislation, be prepared to relate that to the legislator so she/he will know how the bill affects real people.
- Prepare non-argumentative responses to specific points you may not agree with.
- It is good to bring a written statement to leave with your legislator at the end of the meeting.

## The Meeting

- Thank your legislator graciously for his/her time. Say that you are a constituent. Be prepared to speak with a staffer if the legislator has been called away.
- State the reason for your meeting: "I am here to speak with you about Senate Bill #\_\_\_, dealing with Campaign Finance..."

- State your position on the bill and the action you would like the legislator to take. Highlight how the issue impacts you or others in the district. If possible, tell a personal story.
- Ask where the legislator stands on the issue. If the legislator agrees with you, ask what she/he will do (e.g., be a sponsor; vote for/against; educate colleagues in the Assembly/Senate). If he/she does not agree with you, ask why.
- LISTEN. You may receive an answer that will surprise you and offer insight into how to advocate for your position.
- Confine your conversation to the specific legislation about which you are meeting.
- If you are representing a group, share how your group developed its position.
- Do not argue. Remember that intelligent, thinking people can hold and exchange differing views. You will be more effective in future dialogues if you build a respectful relationship with the legislator.
- If you are asked a question you cannot answer, promise to get the information to the legislator – and then do so.



## Following the Meeting

- Send a thank you note with more information about your topic and/or the piece of information you promised to find.
- Write up notes immediately after leaving the meeting while the information is still fresh in your mind. If you are representing a group, be sure to turn in your notes.
- Keep in touch with your legislators. Let them know when you appreciate how they vote, and when you do not. Legislators listen to their constituents!



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