

## **Lobbying DOs and DON'Ts**

**DO:** Get to know your legislator in advance of asking for his/her help.

**DO:** Let your legislator know you are a constituent.

**DO:** Be on time for appointments.

**DO:** Have one chief spokesperson who will manage all discussion during a large group meeting with a legislator.

**DO:** Keep the “bottom line” in mind. Be concise, clear, and to the point in your remarks to legislators. Time is limited.

**DO:** Be (and sound) convinced of the essential value and importance of the issue you are bringing forth. You will never convince anyone else if you are not convinced yourself.

**DO:** Emphasize local examples and the local impact of any legislation.

**DO:** Write emails to your legislators. Constituent email is strongly considered. Emails should be short, with the issue and bill number (if there is one) in the first paragraph. The subject line should say you are a constituent.

**DO:** Leave material (if appropriate) with your legislator and provide information about how to get in touch with you later.

**DO:** Let your legislator know if you do not know the answer to their question. Tell them you will follow up with the information they requested.

**DO:** Let UWSL know if your legislator had any questions you were unable to answer or concerns you were unable to address adequately.

**DO:** Write a thank you note to your legislator for meeting with you, and be sure to thank him/her if s/he supports your position on a bill, or an issue.

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**DON'T:** Mislead or give your legislator false information. If you do so unknowingly, go back and admit your mistake.

**DON'T:** Send form letters; they are usually disregarded.



**DON'T:** Use jargon or acronyms.

**DON'T:** Get drawn into any confrontation with a legislator that appears to be "dead-ended."

**DON'T:** Belittle those who disagree with you. On the next issue, they may be on your side.

### **Additional Suggestions for Successful Lobbying**

1. Be fair and respectful toward public officials.
2. Avoid cynicism.
3. Be understanding. Put yourself in the public official's place.
4. Be friendly. Don't contact public officials only when you want their help.
5. Be reasonable. Recognize that there are legitimate differences of opinion.
6. Be thoughtful. Commend the right things public officials do.
7. Be constructive. You don't like to be scolded, pestered, or preached to—and neither do they.
8. Be realistic and persistent. Remember that controversial legislation is difficult to pass and legislators have many constituents to answer to.
9. Be practical. Recognize that each lawmaker has commitments and must make trade-offs.
10. Be a good opponent. Fight issues, not personalities.
11. Be informed. Do your homework. The mere fact that you want an official to adopt your position won't be enough.
12. Be loyal and trustworthy. Never leave officials out on a limb by changing your positions after they have publicly taken the position that you urged upon them.
13. Be discreet. Never share private information or gossip.
14. Be generous. Remember that in success everyone can claim credit. Thank policy makers for their positive acts at least as often as you inquire why they went wrong.