



## Lobbying 101

It's your right, as a citizen of the state, to personally lobby your legislators. You don't need special permission to make your voice heard and your views known. Here are tips to help with the process:

### 1. Know the process

Familiarize yourself with the General Assembly's website, [www.legis.iowa.gov](http://www.legis.iowa.gov). You will find information on the legislative process and can learn how a bill or an idea becomes a law under the [Resources & Civic Education](#) tab.

### 2. Do your homework

Make sure your conscience is well-formed and the information you present is accurate. The points you make in conversation and the information you present in materials should always be credible.

### 3. Be able to tell your story

It's important that your legislator hear how the issue relates to your life, your community, your business, or your church. Prepare a brief elevator speech (30 seconds or a few sentences) that explains why you care about the issue. Clearly conveying the relevance of your issue and your commitment to finding a solution is often more important than knowing all of the technical details of the bill or issue.

### 4. Find help

Find allies on the issue, whether within your church or through contacts with other groups or businesses.

### 5. Prioritize contacts and how they will be contacted:

- Personal visits at the Capitol or between sessions
- Forums or "town hall" held by the legislator
- Letters or phone calls

### 6. If you decide to make a personal trip to the Capitol, these are the basics:

- If a time has been set, be on time. Make introductions and a little small talk. Keep it short and to the subject, not overly technical. Come prepared with three things:
  - A brief outline of the issues
  - Facts supporting your position
  - Specific recommendations for action
- After your opening, ask for their position, if any. Listen to what they have to say!
- Leave a one-page fact sheet and have a copy of the bill on hand.
- Thank them for their time and end on a good note (you might be back again).
- Follow up on any additional information you need to supply as quickly as possible.
- *Note:* if you are meeting with a legislator as a team, coordinate and assign responsibilities beforehand to avoid confusion.



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### Additional Helpful Hints

- The best days to make contacts at the Statehouse are usually Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday, beginning at 8:30 a.m.
- **The legislative chambers are on the second floor of the capitol.** The entrance to the Senate chamber is located on the south side and the entrance to the House chamber is on the north side. In front of each door is a large board with pictures of all senators and representatives. There is also a desk with a small notepad of slips that are filled out to request a meeting with a senator or representative. Fill out a slip with the information required.
- **Note: On the request slip, the number required for a particular legislator is their seat number, not their district number.** Their seat number can be found on the large picture board located at the chamber entrance.
- **After you have completed the slip, submit it to the doorman stationed in front of the entrance.** Be conscious of other groups and lobbyists who are also waiting to see legislators.
- **If the legislator is unavailable, the doorman or a page will let you know.** If the schedule of a legislator allows, they may arrive shortly after they receive your note.
- **Legislators are happy to meet with you and will appreciate your effort to contact them in person.** Their success depends on knowing the thoughts and concerns of their constituents. That said, legislators are busy people and may only have a brief time to talk with you. Make your main points as concise and possible.
- **Be ready to tell your story.** Successful advocates know how to localize and personalize their story and do so in a clear and succinct way. Practice your elevator speech and be ready to share why you care about the issue and how it impacts your life and your community.
- **Listen to what the legislator has to say.** Be courteous and brief in your conversation. The most important takeaway from your exchange will be the impression you leave as a thoughtful and well-informed constituent.