

# Do's and Don't's of Citizen Lobbying

## Personal Visits

### **Do:**

- Make an appointment
- Dress neatly
- Introduce yourself
- Stick to the subject at hand
- If you don't know something, say so
- Be honest
- Know something about the official
- Be cordial to the assistant
- Be on time - but be prepared to wait
- Know the number/name of the bill and something about it
- Call or write in a summary of the meeting afterwards
- Thank the public official for the meeting
- Enjoy your visit - you are one of the few people making change!

### **Don't:**

- Be angry
- Be hostile (I'm a taxpayer!)
- Threaten (You'll pay for this at the polls!)
- Be afraid to be assertive
- Have a lot of material (it will never be read)
- Lose credibility (it will affect everyone who lobbies on the same subject after you)

### **Points to Know:**

- Most public officials are happy when their constituents visit - they'll be friendly
- Public officials want people to like them
- You pay their salary, they work for you
- Cultivate a good rapport with the assistant and staff - they can be very helpful

## Common Pitfalls - Don't Let Them Throw You!

- The public official doesn't show up for your appointment
- The public official is late for your appointment
- Constant interruptions during your meeting
- Meeting is cut short
- Public official doesn't have a copy of the bill/proposal or hasn't read it
- Public official takes control of the meeting and you never get to make your points
- Public official asks so many questions that you find it difficult to make your point
- Opposition walks in while you are talking
- Public official says things like: "I always hear from the other side, not yours."  
"I'll have to wait until it comes out of committee."  
"Don't worry, it'll never come to a vote."  
"It's a lost cause." "I'm not on that committee."

## Hints

- Confirm appointment the morning of the appointment
- Bring a copy of the bill/proposal with you
- Know exactly what you want to get from the official (yes or no vote, commitment not to vote, etc.)
- Prioritize your points (especially important if the meeting is cut short)
- Know your official's background (voting record, position on the issues, personal history)
- Try to find a common ground with the legislator
- Make yourself available as a resource
- Thank the assistant or staff person