GRASSROOTS LOBBYING, CHANGING THE WORLD

By Shenna Bellows for Sierra Club Maine Chapter
What Is Lobbying?

- Legal definition: “to **communicate** directly with any official in the legislative branch or any official in the executive branch or with a constitutional officer for the purpose of **influencing** any legislative action.”

- Grassroots lobbying is making sure that citizen legislators whose job it is to represent us have the information they need to make the best decisions.
Why Is Lobbying Important?

- 151 State Representatives. 35 State Senators.
- 1104 Bills as of March 24, 2015
- 6 months (January – June). It’s a roller coaster!
How We Know Lobbying Is Important

- What legislators can focus on depends on what they care about and **equally importantly**, what they think their constituents care about.

- According to the Center for Responsive Politics at [www.opensecrets.org](http://www.opensecrets.org), $3.23 billion was spent on lobbying in Washington in 2014. Lobbying is big business. Grassroots power is our answer.
"Thinking Outside the Box About Power"

*I am not a sociologist, and there are lots of ways to think about political power, but it’s worth keeping in mind that money is only one source of power in lobbying, and often it’s not the most important one!"
Levels of Activism

- In Person Meeting
- Public Testimony at Legislature
- Attend an Event
- Personal Phone Call
- Personal Email or Letter
- “Clicktivism”
How You Can Make a Difference

- Sign up for Sierra Club Maine action alert list & click when we ask.
- Find your legislator.* Send her a personal email tonight!
- Send an email to every legislator you know.
- Find your legislator.* Give him a call tomorrow!
- Sign up for Sierra Club Maine Grassroots Lobby Day on April 2!
- Schedule a face-to-face meeting with your legislator in your district.
- Organize a local coffee or house party and invite your legislator.
- Go to an event where your legislator will be.

*The legislature has a website to help you find your representatives by town. Google “Maine find your legislator” to access it or go to https://www1.maine.gov/legis/house/townlist.htm.
Grassroots Lobbying Plus

Write a letter to the editor

Recruit others to lobby too

Organize a local event
How We Wield Influence

- Personal Experience
- Professional Expertise
- Relationships
Don’t forget to lobby your friends! Don’t assume you know where they are or what they will do.

Is there one degree of separation between you and the legislator? Name it.

Identify common ground.
- Geography
- Political party
- Faith
- Professional or social affiliation
Personal & Professional Expertise

- Have you had an experience that connects to this issue?
- How will this affect you?
- How will this affect your family?
- Why do you care?
- Have you worked in this field?
- Have you studied this issue carefully?
- Do you belong to an organization that is an expert in this area?
- Are you an expert?
CREDIBILITY IS POWER

- You are the expert on your own experience.
- Know the basic facts.
- Tell the truth.
- Avoid exaggeration.
- Say “I don’t know, but I can find out” if you don’t know.
- There are no permanent friends or enemies in politics.
Priorities for Sierra Club Maine

As a member of the state’s Environmental Priorities Coalition (EPC), we support these EPC priority bills:

- Building Maine’s solar economy and improving energy security
- Keeping roads and wildlife safe with the Stream Crossing Bond
- Lowering energy costs with the Energy Efficient Housing Bond
- Protecting our natural resources with the Forest, Farm, and Fish Bond
- Updating Maine’s Endangered and Threatened Species List
- Protecting Maine lakes and wildlife habitat

In addition, Sierra Club Maine will be working to pass bills that:

- Support new passenger rail service in Maine, including a bond to move forward commuter service connecting Portland to Lewiston/Auburn on existing state-owned tracks
- Monitor and address sea level rise and climate adaptation
- Provide a consumer tax credit for electric vehicles
- Prohibit plastic microbeads in consumer products
- Set pollution standards on building foam products
Practical Tips for Emailing/Phoning

- Address the legislator as "Senator" or "Representative".
- Identify yourself by name and address, and identify the bill you want to talk about by bill number (LD xxxx).
- Briefly state what your position is and how you would like your legislator to vote.
- Explain how the bill would affect you, your family, your business, and your community that the legislator represents. Sierra Club can provide talking points, but your personal impact story is most important!
- Ask for your legislator's view on the bill, and for a commitment to vote for your position.
- If the legislator takes a position opposite to yours, respect it, express disappointment (not anger), and offer to answer questions or supply any additional information.
- As soon as possible, follow up with the information and restate your position.
Tips for a Successful In-Person Meeting

**DO**

- Do a little background research on your legislator. (Ask us about his environmental record.)
- Be respectful & assertive.
- Dress professionally.
- Allow the legislator the opportunity to talk about her views.
- Follow up with more information after the meeting.

**DON’T**

- Get hostile or angry (I’m a taxpayer!) or threaten your legislator (You’ve lost my vote!)
- Bring too many pages of material. (It probably won’t be read.)
- Be afraid to say “I don’t know, but I can find out.” (SC can help track down the answer.)
- Forget to ask how they will vote.
JOIN US ON APRIL 2, 2015 FOR SIERRA CLUB MAINE’S GRASSROOTS LOBBY DAY!

- Lobby Day starts at 9 a.m. at the Welcome Center
- Learn about Sierra Club Maine environmental priorities.
- Hear from legislators about their environmental bills.
- Meet with legislators one on one to influence their vote.
- Lunch with fellow SC members & staff to talk strategy.
Additional Resources

- For more information on Sierra Club Maine Chapter’s environmental and legislative programs, go to [www.sierraclub.org/maine](http://www.sierraclub.org/maine)
- Contact for State Representatives: 2 State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333-0002. (207) 287-1400 or 1-800-423-2900
- Contact for Senators: 3 State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333-0003. (207) 287-1540 or 1-800-423-6900
- Contact for Governor: Office of the Governor: 1 State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333-0001. (207) 287-3531 or 1-855-721-5203