

**LOBBYING IN THE UNITED STATES**  
**A PRIMER ON KEY ELEMENTS OF LOBBYING**  
**US GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS**

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# Introduction to Lobbying

- *What is lobbying in the United States?*
  - Lobbying = advocacy
  - Lobbying involves marketing an idea or a priority to a government official
  - It requires an understanding of that official's preferences, likes, dislikes, and prior record on the issue
  - Lobbying is a very personal business where **trust and reputation are critical**
- *What are the key elements to a lobbying campaign?*
  - Outreach to Congress and the Administration
  - Building Grassroots support
  - Media/communications
  - Coalition building
- *Who lobbies in Washington?*
  - Everyone (over 10,000 registered lobbyists in DC alone)

# Lobbying Fundamentals

## Things you need to do before you ever walk in the door to lobby someone

### 1. Be professional

- First impressions matter
  - Proper attire, etiquette, hygiene
  - Friendly approach
  
- Be respectful of the office and the institution
  - Respect their time – make an appointment and don't be late
  - Address Members of Congress and Administration officials by their titles (“Senator”, “Representative,” “Madam Secretary,” “Mr. Chairman,” etc)

### 2. Be prepared

- Know as much as possible about the official you are lobbying
  - Membership on key Committees
  - Bills introduced
  - Floor statements, speeches, press releases
  - Roll call votes
  - Administration policies/regulations

- Know as much as possible about the Representative’s state/district
  - District demographics generally
  - Top employers in the district
  - Any employees you have in the district
  
- Know the nature of your relationship with that office
  - Friendly or unfriendly?
  - Did you support them politically in their last campaign
  - When is the last time you visited the office?
    - What did they ask about?
    - What were their concerns?
    - What follow up did you provide?

### 3. Know your product/bring good information

- Be prepared to discuss:
  - What you're asking for
  - Why it's important
    - To the government official and/or his constituents
    - To your company
  - Why the issue is timely
    - Public officials are very busy → why do they need to focus on this *now*?
  - Where the issue stands in the legislative process
  - Who supports you and who opposes you on the issue
  - What the official has done on this issue or related issues in the past (as appropriate)
  - What you want official to do
  
- Prepare concise talking points → Maximum one page (bulleted). Include background attachments if necessary

#### 4. Bring allies to the table

- The bigger the coalition, the harder you are to ignore.
- Focus on the official's natural constituency – business, agriculture, labor, etc
- Allies in Congress and other Administrative agencies are also valuable

#### 5. Role play before your meeting

- Rehearse your responses to questions or comments
  - Keep answers short
  - Keep a positive focus
  - Don't be argumentative
- If more than one person is attending the meeting, agree on spokespersons for particular issues.
- Avoid contradicting each other in a meeting

#### 6. Follow the law

- Lobbyists must register and follow very specific guidelines on political contributions, gifts, etc.
- Lobbyists are required to file quarterly public disclosures and are subject to criminal penalties for violating the rules
- Gifts are illegal. Just stick to messaging and principles detailed above

## What to do during the meeting

- Keep it short/simple (KISS principle)
- Be flexible, but try to remember your strategy
- Make your points, and then focus on listening carefully to what the official tells you
- Passion is good, but must be controlled
- Don't forget to ask the official for support
  - If the response is unclear, ask for clarification
  - Be polite but persistent
- Provide the official and staff with talking points/backgrounders
- Thank the official and/or staff and the scheduler
- If there are constituents in your group, take a photo

## What to do after the meeting

- Send a thank you note, including a reference to the issues discussed
  - Provide any information requested in the meeting
- Follow up on any unresolved matters
  - If the official is undecided, follow up in several weeks with some new information and again asking for support
- Send copies of relevant articles, talking points, editorials, etc on the issue, particularly if they were placed in local publications



# Building Grassroots Support

## What is grassroots?

- Grassroots is the business community equivalent to what labor unions and environmentalists do so well
- It's people who care enough about an issue to spend their time, money and emotional energy to promote their position on that issue
- It's people who are politically active

## What do you need to do to build and activate grassroots support?

- Identify possible grassroots activists
  - Company employees
  - Affiliates, allies
- Educate
  - Provide them with easy-to-understand bulleted talking points
  - Use the internet
  - Use company events and company newsletters, flyers, pay stubs, etc
- Motivate & Activate
  - Connect the issue to their pocketbooks
  - Convey sense of urgency
  - Give them sense of empowerment → how can they make a difference
  - Make them feel a part of an important endeavor
  - Let them know when their efforts result in victory

### What do you want grassroots activists to do?

- Town meetings/open houses → attend and ask questions
- Letters to the editor → provide them with drafts
- Letters to Congress and the Administration → provide with drafts
- Patch through phone calls → provide sample script and talking points
- Social media – blogs, twitter, facebook, etc
- Visits to Washington or the local government offices
- Testimony on the Hill or before an Agency
- Speaking with media and providing local voices on an issue
- Holding rallies in support/opposition to legislation/regulations

### Don't forget grasstops

- Maintain a list of those grassroots activists that are closest, personally, to Members of Congress or the Administration (neighbors, childhood friends, former staff, etc)
- Top political supporters

# Media/Communications

## Develop a clear, consistent message

- Use simple talking points
- Focus on the best visual or quickest way to convey your message
- Keep the message consistent → don't confuse the audience with conflicting positions

## Target your message

- Determine where you are weakest (district, state, region) and develop a message that will play well in that area
- Focus on officials that you can realistically convert to your side
- Message may be different depending on location/audience/type of media

### *Be strategic with media*

- Sometimes no media at all is better than a splashy campaign
- Be aware of budget constraints
- Use earned (free) media where possible
- Use relationships with reporters, bookers, etc, to place people on talk shows, interviews

### *Social media is CRITICAL*

- Include social media in your media and messaging campaign
- Encourage allies to push out creative messages through various social media

### *Pick the best messengers and venues*

- Use sympathetic actors/visuals
- Don't forget the internet
- Use talk radio, cable and inside the beltway media to convey impression of campaign with momentum and spur earned media
- Use congressional and Administration allies
- Use allies in State & local governments, particularly where media is local

# Coalition Building

## Coalitions maximize assets and divide the labor

- They help to divide the work load and maximize relationships
- Coalitions help demonstrate broad support
- They provide a quick resource for media, Congress and the Administration to reach out to for witnesses, interviews, testimonials

## Coalitions provide networking

- Many K Street consultants and law firms are eager to get involved in coalitions because they provide good networking
- Participants are eager to show value in the coalition

## Coalitions often merge with prior efforts

- There are many coalitions that already exist from prior efforts. These coalitions can be employed on new/similar efforts, thus providing instant credibility and good contacts

### Associations are a key component of any coalition

- AmCham and US Chamber network is highly regarded and very effective as an ally
- Sectoral associations (PhRMA, NAM, Farm Bureau, etc) are helpful for more targeted messaging

### Coalitions are a good one-stop shop

- More convenient for government officials to get quick answers or for outreach for meetings
- Management for website/internet
- Ensure consistent messaging for all supporters
- Quick reference point for media

### State/local element is key

- Include local political supporters and associations in any coalition effort

# Summary

## Lobbying = advocacy

- Know your audience and prepare in advance to maximize chances for success
- Utilize tools at your disposal
  - Facts
  - Stories
  - Grassroots alliances
  - Media, including social media
  - Coalition support
- Protect your reputation through honesty, reliability and professionalism
- Have fun