



10 TIPS ON LOBBYING

IBEW® POLITICAL/LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

- 1. Be Prepared.** Bring fact sheets, backup materials, memos, or letters for the legislator, along with extra copies for the staff. Know the issues, and understand who supports you AND who opposes you. Be prepared to answer questions.
- 2. Keep Materials Brief.** Legislators and their staff get thousands of documents on issues. They need facts that are short and concise. A one-page sheet with “must know” information and a short memo is enough. But if they ask for more information, have it ready.
- 3. Identify Everyone Attending.** Use your IBEW title if you are an officer, business agent, steward, or staff person. Be sure to point out where you live if you are a constituent. Try to have a role for each person attending and plan who will speak ahead of time.
- 4. Say What You Know.** It’s okay if you don’t know the answer to a question. Tell the legislator you will find an answer and get back to them. You will lose credibility if you give false or misleading information.
- 5. Be Specific and Direct About What You Want.** Make sure the purpose of the meeting is clear. Have bill numbers ready; if it is a budget item, try to have information about where the issue is located in the budget bill. Make sure you ask the legislator what you are looking for in a direct way. Is it to vote one way or another on an issue? Is it to speak to the leadership? Is it to write a letter on an issue or ask for funding for a program?
- 6. Stay Focused During the Meeting.** Legislators are good at not answering questions and changing the subject, so try to keep them on topic during the meeting. Avoid small talk until after the meeting, and steer the conversation back to the issue if someone goes off on a tangent. Focus on getting answers to your questions.
- 7. Don’t Argue and Stay Calm.** Not every legislator is able to meet with you in person. If you end up meeting with a staff person, don’t be insulted. It is often a key staff person who writes bills or works on certain issues. The legislator may need time to absorb the information, so you may not get answers during meetings.
- 8. Keep Control of the Meeting.** Don’t let the legislator distract from the purpose of the meeting. If they ask you for something not related to the issue at hand, let them know you will take their information or questions and get back to them. Keep your agenda front and center.
- 9. Anticipate the Arguments of Your Opponent.** Tell your legislator if there is opposition to your issue. Prepare your legislator to answer the opposition, and don’t let them get blindsided. Remember, they are your ally—so help them.
- 10. Follow Up and Follow Through.** Everyone who attends the meeting should send a thank you note to the legislator. The note should remind the legislator of any commitments they made to your issue. Answer any questions that the legislator asked, and provide any information that they requested. Do this in a timely manner in order to determine what your next step is.

Adapted from New York State AFL-CIO, “Ten Tips on Lobbying.”