

Basic Rules for Lobbying

1. Knowledge is power and is important to building a working relationship with legislators and fellow participants in the legislative process.
 - a. Know your subject and be specific; identify your subject matter clearly and concisely including the bill number and let the legislator know your position on the legislation.
 - b. Personalize the information - describe how the issue affects the University.
 - c. Know the rules and deadlines – of the committees, of the members, of the lobby.
 - d. Know the players – members, staff, and other interests.
2. Credibility is your most precious asset – it takes time to build, can be destroyed quickly, and once destroyed, is difficult to recover.
 - a. If you don't know the answer to a question, say you don't know, and use the opportunity to follow up with a legislator, rather than making something up, and running the risk of getting caught and ruining your credibility.
 - b. You are the best person to deliver bad news, rather than letting somebody else shape your message.
 - c. "No Surprises" is key to building an effective political relationship.
3. Keep the message simple and easy to understand. You have about two minutes to make an issue compelling, and about another five to make it convincing.
4. Be polite to staff. They control access, and, in the State Legislature, they are frequently related to the legislator.
5. Build coalitions. The broader the base of support, the greater your chances of success.
6. Don't fight yesterday's battles. If you lost something, give it up and move onto the next issue. Holding grudges will limit your ability to build coalitions. Nevertheless, legislators tend to remember everything, especially things that made them mad.
7. Keep legislators in touch with their grass root constituents. Use constituent awards and news to keep legislators aware of what you are doing.
8. Know how to take no for an answer and move on. Never give up on anyone, but remember the goal is getting the votes you need.
9. Hit them early, and hit them often, and hit them late. With some legislators it's the last person who speaks to them who gets the votes. But you can't wait until the 11th hour to get your message heard.
10. Say thank you, write thank you, and show thank you.