



GUIDE TO BEING AN EFFECTIVE CITIZEN LOBBYIST

Citizen Lobbyist Training

Agenda

- What is a Citizen Lobbyist?
- Understanding the Legislative Process
- How an Idea Becomes Law
- How to Track a Bill or Issue
- Being a Citizen Lobbyist and Participating in the Legislative Process

What is a Citizen Lobbyist?

- Lobbying is the practice of convincing a Legislator or group of Legislators to support or oppose a bill or issue.
- The citizen lobbyist has existed nearly as long as democratic government itself. The term “lobbying” originates from the early practice of attempting to influence legislators in the lobby outside of the legislative chambers before a vote.
- A Citizen Lobbyist:
 - Advocates
 - Educates
 - Participates

Understanding the Legislative Process

- Citizens may become involved in the process throughout the year.
- The legislature meets for 45 day beginning on the fourth Monday in January. The rest of the year, legislators participate in interim meetings.
- In Utah, the House holds 75 members, and the Senate holds 29 members.
- Bills receive up to three readings on each side of the legislature.
- To pass a bill, you need: $38 + 15 + 1$, however lots of ways to kill a bill!
- The Governor can either sign the bill, veto it, or allow it become law without his signature.

How an Idea Becomes Law

- An idea is developed.
- A bill is drafted.
- The bill is introduced in the House or Senate. – “First Reading”
- The bill is sent to the Rules Committee
- The bill can be assigned to a standing committee and receives a hearing.
- If passed by the committee, the committee report is read on the floor. – “Second Reading”
- The bill is debated on the floor. – “Third Reading”
- Process is repeated in other body.
- If passed, the bill is enrolled and prepared for review by the governor.
- The bill is reviewed and acted on by the governor.
- The bill can become law 60 days after the end of the legislative session.

How to Track a Bill or Issue

- You may find an organization that is following or working on the issue that you are interested in and join their email or action alert list.
- Become familiar with the Utah legislature website <http://le.utah.gov/>
- Use the Utah legislative tracking service <http://le.utah.gov/asp/billtrack/track.asp>
- Listen and watch proceedings online

Being a Citizen Lobbyist

- Know your legislator
 - <http://le.utah.gov/GIS/findDistrict.jsp>
- Take action when alerted by organizations or take action on your own.
- Call or meet with your legislator.
- Write letters and emails to your legislator and committee members.
- Testify at Committee hearings
- Write letters to the editor, blog, send emails or talk to your friends and family.
- Use social media to follow legislative action (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)

Things To Remember When Communicating With Elected Officials

- Be Polite.
- Your elected officials are citizens of Utah, just like you.
- There is no wrong way to lobby if you stay on message.
- Practice what you want to say with family and friends first.
- The goal is not to get legislators and other elected officials to like you, the goal is for them to see you as a member of their community.
- Everyone in a democratic society has the right to participate in government processes and require accountability from their elected official.
- Be confident. Your voice matters and you have the tools, talents, and capabilities to address your concerns and expectations with your elected officials.
- No longer are you a spectator but a key player in the democratic process!

The Phone Call – Good Method

Legislators pay attention to phone calls which are for or against an issue

- Phone calls are most useful when a vote has been scheduled and there is not time for a letter or visit.
- Phone calls will usually be answered by office staff, unless you have a legislator's cell number.
- Give your name and address
- Cover one topic per call.
- Keep your phone call short and simple:
- “I support (bill name and number) because (list 2 – 3 points) and I urge (legislators name) to vote (for or against) this bill)
- If you are calling to request information about the legislators position, your call will be transferred to a staff or intern working with the legislator. If they do not know the answer, ask them to find out and get back with you.

Writing Letters, Emails & Text Messages – Better Method

Legislators count the letters, emails and texts for or against an issue

- State your name, **that you are a constituent**, your position and exactly what you want the legislator to do in the first paragraph.
- Cover one subject per letter. Write more than one letter if you have multiple issues.
- If the issue can be identified by a bill name & number, include it (and do so in the subject line of your email).
- Describe the legislation and how it affects you. Talk about your own experience if you can.
- Request a reply if you want one.
- Always thank a legislator if they vote as you requested and thank them for their time in responding to you.

Participate in Committee Hearings.

- Committee meetings are open to the public and can be a forum for citizens to express their views.
- Public testimony can influence the committees action and can become part of the permanent record.
- Agendas are posted 24 hours in advance of a meeting and can be found at <http://le.utah.gov/asp/interim/glance.html>
- Be familiar with the committee process.
- Know the committee members and the issues to be addressed.
- Prepare your testimony in writing and rehearse your speech so that it is only 2 – 3 minutes.
- Be prepared to answer questions.

<http://le.utah.gov/documents/aboutthelegislature/TestifyingbeforeaLegislativeCommittee.htm>

Other Ways to Lobby

- Letters to the editor – daily and weekly newspapers, magazines, etc.
 - Keep it short and on one subject. Usually 500 words or less. Use same tips as writing a letter to an elected official.
 - Include your contact information.
- Blogs and social networking sites.
- Talking with family and friends.