

Following Up After the Meeting

There are three important things you must do after meeting with an elected official:

1. Debrief with the other community members as soon as possible, preferably right after you leave the legislator's office. Discuss your impressions of what happened and what your next steps are. Recap and take notes on some of the key things the legislator said (some of you will have picked up on things that the others didn't).
2. Follow up promptly with a thank-you letter to the legislator and staff. In this letter, restate your key points, include any further information the legislator requested, and reiterate any commitments the legislator made in the meeting. This correspondence is a polite gesture as well as an information vehicle. And it will help to build your relationship with him/her. Include any additional materials he/she requested.
3. Meet with them again! Lobbyists regularly use one meeting as a springboard to the next contact with a legislator, and so should you. Perhaps invite them to your organization's member meeting, or send them a complimentary copy of your newsletter.

Tips for Successful Lobbying Meetings

- Bring a one-page fact sheet with you that covers the main points about the issue. Give it to the legislator during your discussion.
- Unless the legislator sits on committees directly related to your issue, he/she will need information about the specifics of the problem and the bill.
- Avoid hostility at all costs. Even if you disagree with the legislator's opinion, avoid arguing. Just state your convictions and ask for her support.
- Be a good listener as well as a good talker.
- Do not underestimate the influence of the legislator's staff; don't pass on the opportunity to meet with staff if the legislator is unavailable.
- If the legislator keeps changing the subject, tactfully but firmly bring the conversation back on topic.
- Elected officials are generalists and will not know as much about your issue as you do. Speak with confidence and authority on your issue. You are their source of information at that moment.
- Don't just drop by their office. Legislators are very busy, so always schedule an appointment.

