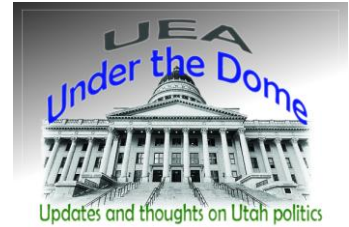
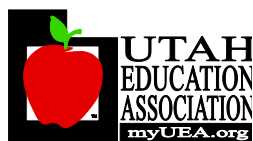


## Tips on How to Successfully Talk to (Lobby) Your Legislator



Lobbying is all about building relationships. The better your relationship is with a legislator, the more the legislator will respect and listen to you. Even if there is not an education issue on the horizon, you can talk to your legislator about your general concerns regarding education. As a citizen lobbyist, you hold a powerful position traditional lobbyists do not; you are a voting constituent and you know other voting constituents.

- **Remember that legislators are human beings.** Dress respectfully, be punctual, start your conversation with a compliment (if possible), be friendly and polite, and thank the legislator for their service and for taking the time to meet with you.
- **Share your story.** Tell why and how you are concerned about public education and how it affects you in the classroom. Most members of the legislature are not educators by profession, so the more examples you can give, the more persuasive your arguments will be. Let them know how legislation will impact students, professionals and schools within your own district. *Remember, the smoother you sound with your message, the less sincere you come across.*
- **Be positive.** Always make your case without being critical of others' personalities or motives. Never criticize another legislator, lobbyist or the opposition. If you find yourself in a disagreement with your member of the legislature, don't get embroiled in an argument. *Your responsibility is to present your case, not necessarily win your case.*
- **Be respectful.** Allow the legislator a chance to respond, listen carefully to their advice and don't interrupt. Be prepared to listen and speak. Give them an opportunity to voice their concerns and ask questions.
- **Don't be intimidated.** You likely know more about public education than the legislator you are talking to. If you understand education enough to be employed, you are fully capable of talking about it. *If you wait to do something important until you feel fully prepared and comfortable, it may never happen.*
- **Be honest.** If you don't know the answer to something, admit it and try to get the information later. Be credible, honest and trustworthy. Never lie, exaggerate, conceal facts or make up information. Don't be afraid to admit that you don't know. It gives you the opportunity to follow up and send them more information.
- **Avoid party politics.** Public education is a bi-partisan issue.
- **Maintain a positive relationship.** Maintain a good relationship with your legislators – today's enemy may be tomorrow's friend. Never write off a legislator just because of past voting record or party affiliation. Don't make enemies of legislators – you may need them as friends in the future. Don't take your traditional friends for granted. Be understanding of the complex pressures upon legislators. They may be in office for decades.
- **Find common ground.** Even if a legislator does not support the position you are presenting, he/she probably believes in the value of public education. But if he/she doesn't even believe in that, every legislator still has the responsibility of attending to the concerns of his/her constituents. *Build a bond, not a gap.*
- **Don't apologize.** Never apologize for your position. Remember you are speaking for your school and your students.
- **Thank you notes.** Write thank you notes for every meeting and every vote that helps education. Remember – your legislators are people and will appreciate knowing their efforts are noticed.



*You can and will influence change  
by visiting with your legislator!*