

The Lobbying Process: Connecting with Your Legislator



Lobbying is all about building relationships. The better your relationship with a legislator, the more the legislator will respect and listen to you. As a “citizen lobbyist” you have influence because you are a voting constituent and you know other voting constituents.

- **Share your story.** You don’t have to be a policy expert to share powerful, personal examples of how funding and education policy affect your students, classroom and school. Most legislators are not educators, so sharing what happens every day in your classroom helps them relate abstract policy to real-world impact on students and educators.
- **Keep it student-focused.** Students are at the heart of everything we do as educators. All education policy and funding decisions are important because of how they ultimately affect students. Help legislators understand the impact of their decisions on your students.
- **Be respectful.** Be punctual, friendly and polite. Thank the legislator for their service and for taking the time to meet with you. Be prepared to speak and listen. Allow the legislator a chance to respond, listen carefully to their opinion and don’t interrupt. Give them an opportunity to voice their concerns and ask questions.
- **Be positive.** Make your case without being critical of another’s motives. Never criticize another legislator, lobbyist or group. If you find yourself in a disagreement with your legislator, don’t get into an argument. Your responsibility is to present your case, not necessarily win your case.
- **Be honest.** Be credible, honest and trustworthy. If you don’t have the answer to a question, simply state that and say you can get back to them. This gives you the opportunity to find the information and have another conversation at a later date.
- **Don’t be intimidated.** As a professional educator, you know more about public education than most legislators. And you certainly know more about your students, classroom and school. Don’t feel that you need to talk about the minute details of specific legislation. Talk about your experiences as an educator.
- **Find common ground.** Even if a legislator doesn’t support the specific position you are advocating, work to find common ground on broader public education values and issues.
- **Avoid party politics.** Public education is a bi-partisan issue.
- **Maintain a positive relationship.** Write thank you notes after a meeting and for important votes that support public education. Legislators will appreciate knowing their hard work is noticed.

You have a powerful voice...Speak up for your students and profession!