



# How to be a Citizen Lobbyist

**What is a lobby visit?** A lobby visit is merely a meeting for you to tell your legislator or their staffer what you think about a certain issue and to try to get him or her to take action on that issue.

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## PREPARE FOR YOUR MEETING:

- **Read through your materials.** We've compiled some background information on the issue as well as materials that you can leave behind, but be sure to check your elected officials' stance on the issues you're lobbying for. It's a good idea to read through these materials ahead of time to be sure you're familiar and comfortable with the issues you'll be discussing.
- **Plan out your meeting.** Time is limited. Be sure to identify who will speak on each issue, and who will take notes.
- **Be aware of the goal.** What is it you want your elected official to do – vote for or against a bill? Make a commitment to introduce or co-sponsor legislation? Be sure to consult the materials and stay focused on the goal for each meeting. Asking your elected official or his/her staff member to do something specific will help you know how successful your visit has been!

## DURING THE MEETING:

- **Be prompt and patient.** Elected officials run on very tight schedules. Be sure to show up on time for your appointment, and be patient – it is not uncommon for legislators and staff to be late or to have your meeting interrupted by other business.
- **Keep it short and focused!** You will likely have 20 minutes or less with a staff person, and as little as 10 minutes if you meet with your elected official. Make the most of that brief time by sticking to your topic.
- **Stick to your talking points.** Stay on topic. Having a focus is helpful to ensure that your point of view and request(s) are clear. Remember, we have created materials to leave with your elected official that reinforce specific points and ask(s) made during the meeting.
- **Provide personal and local examples of the impact of the legislation or issue.** This is [the most important thing](#) you can do during your meeting.
- **Saying "I don't know" can be a smart move.** You need not be an expert on the topic you are discussing. It is fine to tell the elected official/staff that you will get that information for him or her. Never make up an answer to a question – giving wrong or inaccurate information can seriously damage your credibility!
- **Set deadlines for a response.** Often if an elected official hasn't taken a position on legislation, he or she will not commit to one in the middle of a meeting. Ask when you should check back to find out how your elected official intends to respond to your request.

## AFTER THE MEETING:

- Right after the meeting, review your notes and make any additions or clarifications for future reference.
- Each person who took part in the meeting should promptly send a personal thank you letter to the elected official.
- Follow up in a timely fashion with any requested materials and information.
- If the legislator or staff member doesn't meet the deadline for action you agreed to during the meeting, ask him or her to set another deadline. Be persistent but flexible!
- Report the results of your meeting by completing either our [on-line reporting form](#) or email us at [info@drsforamerica.org](mailto:info@drsforamerica.org).

*For more information, please visit our website at [www.drsforamerica.org](http://www.drsforamerica.org).*