

Lobbying tips (adapted from VOX advocacy toolkit, CTF, 2015)

How to lobby decision-makers

1. Direct personal contact is the best way to persuade decision-makers including MLAs, and other elected officials. Personal stories are the most powerful tools we have.
2. Three face-to-face possibilities:
 - a. Meet individually or as a group with a decision-maker or their staff. Meetings are typically in MLA constituency offices or at school district buildings, but can be held in your offices or elsewhere. Check on MLA office hours.
 - b. Show up at an event you know that the MLA will attend. It can be a school or union-sponsored event. Practice a thirty second to one-minute “elevator” pitch.
 - c. Invite an MLA to a discussion in a school setting. Members in various roles can provide their current situations, emphasizing what students need to succeed.
3. Lobbying also includes making lots of phone calls, sending lots of emails, postcards, and letters, and holding events covered by the news media.

Make an appointment through the constituency office by phone or letter

- You can ask for a particular time and place, but be prepared to be flexible.
- Ask elected officials and their support staff clarifying questions about their respective meeting protocols, and what you can expect at a meeting, especially if you have not lobbied them before.
- Explore alliances with other groups where possible. If a delegation is meeting with the decision-maker, decide who will speak on which issues and thoroughly research the issues.

Plan for the meeting

1. Determine your specific goals for the meeting: persuading an MLA to support your local’s position(s), demonstrating your support for them, gathering information, confirming a YES or NO vote, asking supportive MLAs to champion your issue(s).
2. Decide who should be at the meeting. Include the people with the most compelling stories and those who may have the most influence with the decision-maker.
3. Figure out where the individual/party stands on the issue you wish to discuss. The more information you have going into the meeting, the better.
4. Have a pre-meeting with those who will attend. Set a strategy: long- and short-term goals, who will speak at the meeting, and what each person will say.
5. Assign roles. Here are some possibilities:
 - Meeting leader: makes introductions, runs the meeting, keeps track of time and the agenda.
 - Storyteller: shares a compelling story about a personal lived experience in the classroom.

- Delivery person: in charge of leaving behind fact sheets, petitions, letters, etc.
- Pitch person: makes the “ask.”
- Meeting recorder: Takes notes on what happened and what both parties promised to do— very important when follow up time comes.

General advocacy tips

- Be on time for the meeting. A short, well-prepared presentation is more impressive and effective than a long, rambling one. Know and stick to your facts.
- Take charge of the meeting. You asked for it, so discuss your issues. Don’t let the decision maker dominate the meeting or take over the agenda.
- Concentrate on solutions rather than problems. Offer information that may help the MLA make the desired decisions and explain things that might be unknown to them.
- Don’t prolong the meeting beyond the allotted time unless invited to continue the discussion.
- Give the MLA a chance to speak. Treat all questions calmly and seriously.
- If you did not send advance material, leave a summary of your views when you leave—one page is ideal. This may be appropriate even if you did send information beforehand.
- Don’t leave without asking about follow up, who you should talk to, and then do talk to them.
- If the meeting has been positive, ask to have a photo taken with the MLA when appropriate. Seek permission to share the photo on social media and elsewhere.
- Send a thank you letter or email after the meeting with an offer to meet again in the future, and that you can provide more information as needed.