



LOBBYING GUIDE

UAW NATIONAL CAP

MAKE VOICE MAKE VOICE
YOUR HEARD YOUR HEARD
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“What the Union fights for and wins at the bargaining table, can be taken away in the legislative halls” – Walter Reuther. This quote reminds us why lobbying and making our voices heard is a vital part of our union. Bills are created and put into law that impact each one of us and our families in our daily lives at work, home, school and communities. We lobby our legislators to ensure our voices are heard from labor’s point of view. Here are a few tips on making the most of your lobby visit.

TIPS FOR YOUR LOBBY VISIT

1. In scheduling a meeting, many elected officials want the request in writing and want to know what subjects will be discussed in the meeting. This is so they can prepare for the meeting and make efforts to have the right staff in the room.
 2. In many government buildings, visitors are screened by a metal detector and all items are screened by an x-ray device. Always check ahead to see what items can be brought into the building.
 3. Be punctual, but be prepared to wait. Despite efforts to be on time, many elected officials have hectic schedules and may accommodate drop-ins which can make them late.
 4. If you are visiting your representative with others, the delegation should meet before the visit to talk about everyone’s roles. There should be one spokesperson leading the delegation, but an effort should be made to give everyone a role. Several well-informed opinions are effective, but try to avoid making the meeting too long or repeating the same points. The delegation should have a specific “ask” or request and document the response to it. Meet immediately after the appointment to debrief any points and make any adjustments for the next visit.
 5. Everyone in the delegation should introduce themselves. It is vital the official know you represent not only yourself, but also the active and retired members of your local. Make the best case for labor’s density in the district – whether it is UAW membership or labor households.
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6. Do your homework. In addition to knowing the UAW position on an issue (and the reasons why), it is useful to know the legislator's current position (argument) so you can use it to develop a reasonable opposing (supporting) argument. But don't feel you need to know every little detail of an issue and don't make up answers, which only undermines your credibility. Tell the elected representative or staffer you will try to find the answer and get back to them.
 7. Do not get distracted or off-message. If the elected representative or staffer seems to want to pull you away from your agenda, commit to a return visit or follow-up conversation. You can address those issues after you have a chance to study and strategize on them.
 8. During the visit, be polite, orderly and clear in your coverage of the lobbying issues. Do not ever threaten or attempt to intimidate an elected official. It doesn't work, and may ruin your relationship with that person. Do not ever mention donations or campaign funds.
 9. Stick to the agenda. Adding additional items dilutes the effectiveness of the visit. If you have a personal issue you want to raise, the appropriate time would be in a follow-up letter and/or meeting.
 10. Conclude the visit with a brief review, agreeing on the facts and positions presented. Confirm the "ask," and thank the elected official for his/her time. You may suggest a follow-up phone call or email.
 11. Leave a position letter – with the names of those in your group – that includes 1-2 personal stories. It's important to have contact information for the facilitator for any further questions, comments or positions.

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ASSIGNING ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

As a delegation, it is important to make assignments. In planning your agenda you should consider the roles of the members of your group and their preparation for the meeting. There are some roles that need to be assigned to ensure a successful meeting. While not everyone needs to have a role, everyone in the group should be able to discuss the issue by using a personal story (if possible) and should be ready to speak if asked. It is also critical that the following roles are planned for the visit:

FACILITATOR: This person leads the meeting and controls the agenda. The facilitator makes sure the meeting runs smoothly and the group hits all its agenda points in the time allotted.

ORGANIZER: This person helps the facilitator stay focused and on schedule. The organizer serves as a timekeeper.

NOTE TAKER: This person oversees taking notes during the meeting. You need an accurate account of what was said so that others working in the union will know the outcome of the meeting. It is also important to keep track of commitments made by you or by the elected official.

WITNESS: This person is directly affected by the issue you are lobbying on and has a compelling story to tell. Witnesses are the heart of your meeting because they bring a face and a name to the issue. Try to have at least one person who can talk personally about the issue.

FOLLOW-UP LETTER WRITER: This person is responsible for writing a thank you letter to the legislator for their time and to reaffirm the commitment. The letter writer also does any follow up and sends copies to people.

The “Ask”

At the end of your visit, it is important to conclude the conversation with the “ask.” This is merely a question where we ask the elected official to commit to a position or action. If we don’t “ask,” then all we have done is have a conversation about issues. It is important that the “ask” be specific – being too general makes the commitment less meaningful. If the official is unable to commit, then find out what it will take to get a decision. Sometimes he/she will want time to decide or will make his/her support conditional on the support of someone else. Either way, if you know the conditions of what it will take to get a positive response, you can start thinking of a game plan for achieving a successful result.