EFFECTIVE CITIZEN LOBBYING

with Minnesota NOW
(National Organization for Women)
WHAT IS CITIZEN LOBBYING?

- Citizen Lobbying is talking directly with elected officials to persuade them to take action or opt to quietly abstain on issues that matter to you.
- When most people think of lobbying, they think of professional lobbyists, who are paid by special interests groups.
- Some of those special interest groups might represent your views, but you need to show up to make sure legislators hear your concerns.
HOW THE LEGISLATURE WORKS

- Legislation begins when a bill is authored by a senator or representative.
- Sometimes the idea for the bill and even the language of the bill is brought to a senator or representative by a citizen or special interest group.
HOW THE LEGISLATURE WORKS

- The senator or representative seeks out co-authors and introduces the bill into the necessary committees.
- Often the citizen/group will have to take the bill jackets around to garner co-author signatures then toss the bill in the hopper.
If the bill passes through the necessary committees, then it goes to the House floor or the Senate for a vote. If you can get enough co-authors on a bill, you can be assured of passage.

The bill needs to be introduced and passed through committees in both legislative bodies, and finally passed by both full legislative bodies.

The bills from the Senate and the House need to be reconciled in conference committee, so that they match.

Then the governor either signs or vetoes the bill.
Do your homework and find out how your legislator has voted on similar issues in the past. If they are newly elected, check information like voter guides to see if they revealed their leanings before they were elected. You can not assume that a legislator takes a particular position based on their political party. Some legislators do not adhere to their party platform.
RESEARCH, RESEARCH, RESEARCH

- Find out as much as you can about where the bill is at in the legislative process and how many legislators have signed on as co-authors to get a feel for the amount of resistance you might receive in your meeting.
  
  [http://www.leg.state.mn.us/leg/legis.aspx](http://www.leg.state.mn.us/leg/legis.aspx)

- Remember: You can lobby at any point in the process.
GETTING THE MEETING

- Be prepared to work with the legislative assistant to set up a meeting time. Also be prepared that the legislator may get pulled into a committee hearing when they planned to meet with you. Depending on their role in that meeting, you can ask their leg. asst. to pull them out to hear you if you can not reschedule, but it’s ideal to have their undivided attention.

- Before you go into the meeting, identify exactly what it is that you want them to do and how you plan to motivate them.
Go into the meeting prepared to think on your feet. You’ll need to figure out the various roles you think your legislator is currently playing, and where you want to move them.

- Supporter ➔ Champion
- Undecided ➔ Supporter
- Opposed ➔ Sideline Sitter
ROCKING THE MEETING-LEGISLATIVE ROLES

- Champion: May write the bill, co-author, speak in favor of bill, shepherd it through process, lobby other legislators
- Supporter: Will vote for the bill
- Undecided: May need more information or input from constituents. May have a position but refuse to disclose it.
- Sideline sitter: Will vote against bill but are willing to not be vocal about it, or perhaps may abstain from the vote.
- Opposed: Plan to vote against the bill.
- Opponent: May speak against bill and lobby other legislators to oppose it.
ROCKING THE MEETING - AGENDA

Be prepared for interruptions. Don’t lose focus.

- Introductions-Identify yourself and any members of your group (i.e. constituent, or member of MN NOW...an equal rights organization with 1,000 members). Figure out how to connect with them in a way that makes them value your input.

- Identify the role they are playing. Gauge how they feel about the bill and assess where you think you can move them.

- Outline the problem, solution and actions needed to be taken.

- Make the ask: Can we count on you to vote yes on this bill?

- Listen and respond

- Thank them for their time and follow-up afterward.
Often you will be lobbying as an individual constituent, but lobbying with a group demonstrates greater power & influence. Divide up roles and responsibilities.

- Leader/Discussion facilitator
- Storyteller
- Pitcher - makes the hard ask
- Reporter - takes detailed notes for impact statement
- Supporters - may not speak but are there to demonstrate power in numbers.
MN NOW believes that all people deserve equal rights. Our six core issues are:

- Constitutional Equality
- Reproductive Rights
- Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender Rights
- Eliminating Racism
- Freedom from Violence
- Economic Justice
If you are interested in lobbying on a particular issue with Minnesota NOW, please let us know and we can help. While only the President of Minnesota NOW or her appointed members can speak on behalf of Minnesota NOW, you can identify yourself as a member of Minnesota NOW to add to your clout before you make your appeal.

You can reach us by e-mailing us at info@mnnow.org.