



A Few Lobbying Tips

1. Know your key message. Know what you want.
2. Don't be miffed at meeting with aides instead of members (if you're in Washington, D.C.). They usually know more about your topic and can have tremendous influence. But note that in-district staff are rarely central to influencing policy; for in-district meetings, try to meet either with the Member of Congress or their D.C. policy staff.
3. Keep a lobbying group small. Choose everyone for how they reinforce the key message and dispel misconceptions (e.g., sustainable agriculture comprises left-leaning activists, unprofitable farmers or "hobby" farmers, etc.); make sure each person knows your expectations. Don't let your appearance detract from your message or credibility.
4. Introduce yourselves and clearly state what issue you want to discuss. Then let each person tell quick, personal stories, reinforced by key facts to communicate your message.
5. Anticipate arguments they might present. Rebut them firmly, factually, and pleasantly.
6. After you make your pitch, allow the member/aide to respond, and listen well. Bring the conversation back to your issue if the member evades it or goes off on a tangent.
7. If you don't know answers to a question, say you'll find out. Don't pretend to know what you don't. Don't respond defensively, and don't ever threaten! Always tell the truth.
8. Think about what the member and his/her staff wants (e.g., good media, public thanks, good information, etc.) and provide it if you can.
9. Thank the member and/or staff for anything legitimate you can.
10. Leave them with brief fact sheets, outlining your position.
11. When the visit is over, write down information you learned about the member's position to share with others for strategic purposes.
12. Follow up with a short letter, thanking them for the meeting and reinforcing your key points and any commitments they made.