

How to be a

# CHAT-POWERED LOBBYIST: 18 HELPFUL TIPS

- 1) Carefully choose three to four compelling points about your issue. Focus on those key points and leave time for discussion after you present your views.
- 2) Arrive on time. Being early is even better.
- 3) Introduce yourself and your organization.
- 4) Be polite, even if the person you talk to is rude.
- 5) Legislative aides are the eyes and ears of Members of Congress; treat them with the same respect as the elected official. The aide will convey your opinions.
- 6) Be specific about what you want and why. Refer to bills by name, number, and sponsors. Good example: "I urge you to support the McCain-Feingold Bipartisan Campaign Finance Reform Bill (S. 1234)." Bad example: "I think the influence of money in politics is important."
- 7) Get specific answers whenever possible: Will the Member of Congress vote for the bill? What steps will the Member of Congress take to advance the issue? Members of Congress will not always want to make a commitment, so you may need to ask your question in several different ways.
- 8) If your Member of Congress agrees with you, you should still briefly discuss the issue, indicating why it is important to you. Members need to hear from you even when you agree.
- 9) Do not hesitate to assert your view, even if it is different than the Member's, but always avoid adversarial rhetorical tactics.

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- 10) Be personal: Give your reasons for your position, not just reasons someone told you. Share a personal experience (a toxic waste site in your neighborhood, a friend without health insurance) to make your argument more powerful.
- 11) Be passionate: Make it clear that you care sincerely about the issue.
- 12) Be concise.
- 13) Be prepared: Know the Member's view on the issue before your meeting. For example, do not ask a Member of Congress to support a piece of legislation he or she has introduced.
- 14) List allies (people and groups) who support your position.
- 15) Anticipate questions and have answers ready. Prepare for your meeting by "role playing."
- 16) Don't hesitate to say "I don't know." Promise to find the answer to any open questions, and do it!
- 17) Always ask the Member of Congress for something: a commitment to consider the issue, co-sponsor the bill, or take other action.
- 18) Thank the Member of Congress or staff person for meeting with you, and follow up with a thank-you note (e-mail is fine).

The Religious Action Center is the Washington office of the Union for Reform Judaism, whose more than 900 congregations encompass 1.5 million Jews and the Central Conference of American Rabbis, whose membership includes more than 1800 Reform rabbis.



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