

Lobbying Tips

I. Prepare. Know What You Are Talking About

II. Presenting Your Testimony

A. **Introduce yourself** - name, title, representation

B. **Be formal.** Address the chair and members of the committee.

C. **Keep it short** and to the point. Members may not appreciate long rambling testimony.

D. **Have your testimony in writing and hand it to the clerk of the committee after you speak.** If you hand it to them before you speak they will read it and not look at you while you talk. Having your testimony in writing also provides that if they run out of time and cut off testimony, you can turn in written testimony.

E. After your testimony, you may be asked questions. If you do not know the answers, **do not bluff.** Tell the Committee you will find out and get the information to the committee--then follow-up.

III. Be Honest and Accurate.

If you ever provide a legislator with inaccurate information, they will never rely on you again for information. If you mistakenly provide inaccurate information, as soon as you discover your mistake, inform the legislator. **Trust is paramount in the legislative process.**

IV. Develop Personal Relationships.

One of the most important lobbying techniques is to develop personal relationships with individual legislators. Such relationships develop in many ways. Attending social events, or meeting with them periodically to discuss your issues. Working closely with certain legislators on particular issues and seeing them through to a successful conclusion always works to establish relationships. Engaging local officials and library users to assist in lobbying on particular issues is always beneficial.

It is also important to establish personal relationships with members of the legislative staff. It is important to know key members of the legislative fiscal information staff and bill writing staff.

V. Give Legislators the Credit.

Thank legislators for their work on your bills, even if they were not successful. Write them thank you notes, and acknowledge their help in public. **Appear to testify and support the legislator when your bill is being heard. Be flexible** if amendments need to be added. Do not adopt the “If I can’t have it all I don’t want any” attitude.

VI. Do Not Burn Bridges.

There are many issues that come up during legislative sessions. A particular legislator may be on the library side on one issue and against it on another. Be careful not to scold a legislator too much if s/he is against you on a particular issue. S/he may support you on the next issue - but not if s/he has suffered much of your wrath.

VII. Establish Good Communication with State Library Staff.

Effective communication with library staff is a must. Let them know if and when you will be available to testify. Ask questions of the State Librarian if you are uncertain about a bill. The State Library will send regular email updates to Commission, librarians, and staff to keep you informed during the legislature. Read these emails and keep up to date. Things change very quickly during the session.

If you have communication with a legislator about a bill, inform State Library staff. If you send or fax letters to legislators, provide the State Library with a copy.

VIII. Involve County Officials, Libraries, and Library users.

Coordinate your legislative efforts with your other county elected officials, library staff and library users. Stand up and support their bills and ask them to return the favor.

IX. Develop Media Relationships

The importance of developing good personal and professional relationships with members of the media who cover the legislature cannot be overstated. It is very important to be accessible to reporters covering the legislature and even more important to know how to respond to their questions. How you respond to questions from representatives of the media can have a tremendous impact on how your position is related to the public. Like relationships with members of the legislature, **relationships with members of the media are based on trust and respect and are developed over long periods of time.**

The State Librarian and the Communications Coordinator are the primary points of contact during the Legislative Session. You may defer questions from the media to them. If you are contacted by the media, please notify MSL staff so they may follow up appropriately.

X. Stick With State Library Policy

Once the state library commission has adopted a legislative agenda, respect it. Do not sabotage the state library and the commission if you do not like a bill. When commissioners oppose their own bill, legislators become confused, and then disregard the importance of the state library