



Maine Women's Lobby

THE VOICE OF MAINE WOMEN

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THE TEN INFORMAL RULES OF LOBBYING or...

Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Lobbying but Never Thought to Ask

- 1. Consider yourself an information source.**
Legislators have limited time, staff, and interest on any one issue. They can't be as informed as they might like on all issues—or the ones that concern you. **YOU** can fill the information gap.
- 2. Tell the truth.**
There is no faster way to lose your credibility than to give misleading information to a legislator.
- 3. Know who is on your side.**
It is helpful for a legislator to know what other groups, individuals, state agencies, and/or legislators are working with you on an issue.
- 4. Know the opposition.**
Anticipate who the opposition will be—organized or individual. Tell the legislator what their arguments are likely to be and provide them with answers and rebuttals.
- 5. Make the legislator aware of any personal connection you may have.**
No matter how insignificant you may feel it is, if you have any friends, relatives, and/or other colleagues in common, let them know! Our legislative process is very informal. While a personal connection may make no difference in your effectiveness—it may make the difference.
- 6. Don't be afraid to admit you don't know something.**
If a legislator wants information you don't have or asks something you don't know, acknowledge that and then offer to get the information they are looking for.
- 7. Be specific about what you are looking for.**
If you want a vote, information, answers to a question—whatever it is—make sure you ask for it directly and get an answer.
- 8. Follow up.**
Find out if your legislator did what she/he said they would. Then, thank them or ask for an explanation as to why they did not vote as they said they would.
- 9. Don't burn any bridges.**
It is very easy to get emotional over issues you feel very strongly about. However, be sure that no matter what a legislator's decision on an issue, you end the conversation on good enough terms

that you can go back to them. Remember that your strongest opponent on one issue may be your strongest ally on another.

10. **REMEMBER YOU ARE THE BOSS!**

Your tax money pays legislators' salaries, pays for the paper they write on, the phone they call you on. YOU are the employer and they are the employees. You should be courteous, but don't be intimidated. They are responsible to you and nine out of ten, legislators are grateful for your input.



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TIPS FOR WORKING WITH YOUR LEGISLATOR

If they agree strongly with your position

- Thank them.
- Ask them to take a leading/active role on this issue (a) in the legislature among their colleagues (b) in the media (c) in the community.
- Ask for advice on who else you should talk to, what supporting arguments they think are effective and any special legislative/P.R. strategy they think you should use.
- Ask if they will “lobby” undecided legislators.
- Thank them again.

If they agree with your position

- Thank them.
- Assure them of your continued interest in the issue and your continued support of their position.
- Ask if they would be willing to help in any way beyond their vote (if so, follow tips above).

If they are undecided

- Inform them of your interest.
- Present your argument as concisely and clearly as possible.
- Ask what their reservations are. Determine if they are political, personal, or due to a lack of information or any combination. Alter your lobbying strategy accordingly.
- Offer to get any information they would like.
- Ask them if there are other individuals/organizations they would like to hear from.
- Get back to them; keep in touch until they have made up their mind.

If they are against your position

- Determine how strongly they are opposed. If not too strong try and persuade them to change their mind.
- If not “swayable,” but not strongly opposed, ask them not to lobby their colleagues.
- If they strongly disagree, write and let them know of your opposition to their position, but don’t waste your time and energy trying to move an immovable object.