DOs and DON'Ts of Volunteer Lobbying

Personal Visits

Do:
• Make an appointment
• Dress neatly
• Introduce yourself
• Stick to the subject at hand
• If you don't know something, say so
• Be honest
• Know something about the official
• Be cordial to the assistant
• Be on time - but be prepared to wait
• Know the number/name of the bill and something about it
• Call or write in a summary of the meeting afterwards
• Thank the public official for the meeting
• Enjoy your visit - you are one of the few people making change!

Don't:
• Be angry
• Be hostile (I'm a taxpayer!)
• Threaten (You'll pay for this at the polls!)
• Be afraid to be assertive
• Have a lot of material (it will never be read)
• Lose credibility (it will affect everyone who lobbies on the same subject after you)
• Put anything on social media that you would not say in person

Points to Know:
• Most public officials are happy when their constituents visit - they'll be friendly
• Public officials want people to like them
• You pay their salary, they work for you
• Cultivate a good rapport with the assistant and staff - they can be very helpful

Common Pitfalls - Don't Let Them Throw You!
• The public official doesn't show up for your appointment
• The public official is late for your appointment
• Constant interruptions during your meeting
• Meeting is cut short
• Public official doesn't have a copy of the bill/proposal or hasn't read it
• Public official takes control of the meeting and you never get to make your points
• Public official asks so many questions that you find it difficult to make your point
• Opposition walks in while you are talking and has been invited to the meeting
• Public official says things like: "I always hear from the other side, not yours."
  "I'll have to wait until it comes out of committee."
  "Don't worry, it'll never come to a vote."
  "It's a lost cause."
  "I'm not on that committee."

Hints
• Confirm appointment the morning of the appointment
• Bring a copy of the bill/proposal with you and one brief fact sheet
• Know exactly what you want to get from the official (yes or no vote, commitment not to vote, etc.)
• Prioritize your points (especially important if the meeting is cut short)
• Know your official's background (voting record, position on the issues, personal history)
• Try to find common ground with the legislator
• Make yourself available as a resource
• Thank the assistant or staff person