



# The Art of Advocacy

A Legislative Toolkit

# Who Me? A Lobbyist?!

- Lobbying is the process of gathering information for the purpose of persuading someone to agree with you.
- Think of it as a political campaign.
- The first objective is to get a commitment from a voter, in this case, a legislator. The second is to win a majority of the vote.

# Who Me? A Lobbyist?!

What's important when lobbying, or advocating for/against an issue?

- Preparation
- Precision
- Professionalism
- Politeness
- Presence

# Who Me? A Lobbyist?!

- Easy Persuasion
  - Start with letters and phone calls
  - When you contact legislators, make it personal
  - If you are a constituent, say so
- Be Seen and Heard
  - Try a personal visit (i.e.: to the Capitol, invitation to your media center)

# Who Me? A Lobbyist?!

- K.I.S.S.
  - Focus on a limited set of issues
- Do Your Homework
  - Know the legislator's name and political party
  - Know your issue well
- Have a Plan
  - Offer solutions
- Don't Leave Empty Handed
  - Ask for a specific action

# Who Me? A Lobbyist?!

- Lobbying is Persistence
  - Follow-up encourages action
- Never Give Up
  - “If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again!”

# Who Me? A Lobbyist?!

## Don't

- Threaten
- Insult or offend
- Write off anyone
- Ramble or preach
- Presume the legislator is familiar with your issue

# Who Me? A Lobbyist?!

- Take the Message Home
- Think globally. Act locally.

“All politics is local.”

~ former Speaker Tip O’Neill

“When you get ‘em by the grassroots, their hearts and minds will follow.”

~ former Senator Everett Dirksen



# Myths

- I can't make a difference
- Somebody else will do it

# Tips

- Your only commodity is your credibility.
- If you can't answer a question confidently, say so and tell them you will get them the information – be sure you follow up with that information within a day or two.
- Most legislators respond best when given a concise message, especially during a short meeting. Prioritize your concerns.

# Tips

- Include relevant statistics, studies and statements that support your cause. Save time for the legislator and make their job easier by offering to be a resource they can turn to in the future.
- To be an effective advocate, take the next step and offer a solution.
- If you invite a legislator to your school, don't "clean it up" or make it over-tidy. Let them see the media center "in action."

# Making it Personal

- Letters should be short and to the point – no more than one page.
- Be clear about the origin of the views you express – are they your personal opinions or are you representing a group, like GLMA?
- If you are writing as a professional, use letterhead.
- Signing preprinted or template letters is less effective than writing your own personal letter.
- Call ahead and ask the staff if the legislator prefers a fax, email, or snail mail.
- If you are mobilizing colleagues or employees, edit the letters for correctness but allow them the freedom to express themselves.

# Making it Personal

- While phone calls and letters are important, nothing is as effective as a face-to-face visit. If you want to make a more substantial difference, invite legislators to your school, visit them at the Capitol or in their district office.
- The Georgia legislature is in session for only a few months (Jan.-April), and most legislators spend weekends at home during the session. Many hold public meetings in their districts, which is an excellent opportunity to talk with them.

# Making it Personal

- Personal stories are highly persuasive.
- Use real life, everyday examples to explain to a legislator how a particular issue might impact you, your school, and most importantly, your students.
- Make your examples as local as possible – mention schools, parents, etc. in their district.

# Making it Personal

- Don't forget to follow up.
- Be polite and persistent. Most legislators hate to say "no."
- If you take the time to follow up, you have a better chance of getting a response to your request.

# The “Ask”

- Close your letter or meeting by requesting a specific response or action.
- Legislators can sponsor legislation, write to state agencies (i.e.: DOE) regarding proposed rules and regulations, vote in a particular way.



# Resources

Georgia General Assembly

[www.legis.ga.gov](http://www.legis.ga.gov)

Georgia Department of Education

[www.doe.k12.ga.us](http://www.doe.k12.ga.us)

Live Legislative Broadcasts (during the session)

[www.legis.ga.gov/Streaming/en-US/Both.aspx](http://www.legis.ga.gov/Streaming/en-US/Both.aspx)

Contact Your Legislator

[http://openstates.org/find\\_your\\_legislator](http://openstates.org/find_your_legislator)

# Resources

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