

## **DO'S AND DON'TS FOR PERSONAL VISITS**

### **Do**

- Make an appointment
- Dress neatly
- Introduce yourself
- Stick to the subject at hand
- If you don't know – say so
- Be honest
- Know something about the elected official
- Be cordial
- Be on time – but be prepared to wait
- Know the number and name of the bill, and something about it
- Thank the public official
- Call or write us with a summary of the visit
- ENJOY YOUR VISIT...you are one of the few people effecting change



### **Don't**

- Be angry (“I’m a taxpayer”)
- Be hostile (“You’re a bigot”)
- Make threats (“You’ll pay for this at the polls!”)
- Be afraid to be assertive
- Have a lot of materials (It will never be read)
- Lose credibility (It will affect everyone who lobbies on the same issue)

### **More helpful hints**

- Confirm your appointment on the morning of your scheduled visit
- Bring a copy of the bill with you
- Know exactly what you want from the elected official (A yes or no vote, an endorsement, etc.)
- Prioritize your points, which is especially important if the meeting is cut short
- Try to find common ground and start there
- Make yourself available as a resource

### **THE TOP TEN STEPS TO HAVING A SUCCESSFUL LOBBY VISIT**

1. Practice your visit beforehand.
2. Develop three talking points at the most – any more can be overwhelming to the official.
3. It's best to lobby with a few other advocates. Define who makes what points. Assign someone to take notes, and someone else to do the introductions at the beginning and summarize things at the end.
4. Be five minutes early, and be prepared to wait. Be respectful of the elected official's time.
5. Humanize and localize the issue - how will the issue affect the elected official's constituents?
6. Listen to the concerns and arguments presented by the elected official.
7. Attempt to match your arguments to the elected official's concerns.
8. If you are not sure of the answer to a question, say so and promise to get back to the elected official with a more comprehensive answer. Never make up an answer.
9. Close the deal—make sure you tell the elected officials what you want them to do for you, and when you get home, send a thank you letter to the official recapping your discussion.
10. And the number one step to having a successful lobbying visit: Be yourself!

*Our thanks to **Equal Rights Colorado** for the contents of this document.*

# Lobbying TIPS

## On Telephoning

*[To find your legislator's phone number, see enclosed pink brochure containing a complete Legislative Directory. On the internet, go to <http://www.leg.state.co.us> and look under "Legislative Directory". A menu of directory links is available, from which you can select the one most suited to your search.]*

Identify yourself and your reason for calling. ("I support/oppose (SV-####).") You will also want to state reasons for your support of opposition to the bill. Ask for your legislator's position on the bill. If a staff member answers, ask to leave a brief message for the legislator and include the same information.

## On Writing Letters:

The letter is often the most popular choice of communication with a legislator. If you decide to write a letter, this list of helpful suggestions will improve the effectiveness of the letter:

- State your purpose for writing in the first paragraph of the letter.
- If your letter pertains to a specific piece of legislation, identify it accordingly, e.g.,  
House bill: HB-####, Senate Bill: SB-####.
- Be courteous, to the point, and include key information. Use examples to support your position.
- Address only one issue in each letter.
- If possible, keep the letter to one page.
- Addressing your correspondence: Include the appropriate title, "Senator" or "Representative", or "The Honorable", which can be used for either. After the title, include the legislator's full name. Note: When writing to the Chair of a Committee or the Speaker of the House, it is proper to address them as "Dear Mr. Chairman" or "Dear Madam Chairwoman" or "Dear Mr. Speaker" or "Dear Madam Speaker".

## On E-mailing:

Generally, the same guidelines apply as those recommended for printed letters.

## Leaving a Personal Note:

If you can't meet with your legislator, you can leave a hand written memo with the secretary in either the Senate or House Offices. The House Office is located in Room 271. The Senate Offices are separated by party affiliation, with Room 274 reserved for the Democrats and room 346 for the Republicans. Make sure to include your full name and street address include zip code. Write a sentence or two about who you are, why you came today, and what you want them to do. Don't forget to sign your name.

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