

How to Conduct an Effective Grassroots Lobbying Effort

Initial Steps

There are five initial steps that must be taken to effectively lobby on your issue:

1. Identify the undecided Congressman or Senator.
2. Identify the official's principal areas of interest or concern. That is, determine factors that affect his/her decision-making process (i.e. determine if he/she is most responsive to constituent interests, the media, business leaders, other politicians, the party leadership, emotional appeals, humanitarian concerns, or a combination of these and/or other factors).
3. Recruit 25 registered voters in the official's district as your activist base -- if you don't already have one. These activists can be recruited from civic groups, churches, political parties, etc.
4. Educate these activists on the importance of your issue and on the government measures they will be advocating. Make sure they fully understand their position and the arguments, both pro and con, so they can be effective advocates of their position.
5. Ask each of these 25 activists to recruit three other family members, relatives, friends, co-workers, and/or fellow church or community-group members to participate. They must live within the official's district and preferably be eligible to vote.

You now have an army of 100 people in the Congressman's or Senator's district.

Seven Steps to Victory

Step 1. Each activist should ask their three volunteers to call the Congressman or Senator's district office to express their feelings on the particular issue. Activists should not use a script as this will reveal that their calls are part of a coordinated effort. Callers should simply ask, in their own words, for the Congressman to please consider their view and stress that they feel strongly about it. In addition, unless it is not true, the callers should mention that they are a registered voter and never miss an election. They should give their name and address and ask the Congressman's staff member to keep them posted on the Congressman's activities on the issue.

It is most important that your activists contact their Senators' and Congressman's district offices. The vast majority of calls to district offices are made by individuals requesting assistance (assistance with visas, social security problems, veteran's problems and the like). Unlike Washington offices, the district offices seldom receive calls or letters from people expressing opinions. Thus, your calls will have greater impact if they are directed to the district offices.

Step 2. Your activists should use the information gathered on the interests of the particular Member of Congress to benefit their position. For example, if the Member is most affected by property rights interests, get the endorsement from leaders of the principal property rights groups in his/her district for your position. Always use the Congressman's or Senator's interests to further your own.

Step 3. Within three weeks of massive phone calling, you should arrange a meeting with the Member of Congress at his/her district office. No more than twelve of the activists should attend the meeting as more may be intimidating. It is important to be sensitive to the Member's position during the meeting and each activist should be prepared to present their views without repeating what others have said and without threats. You are trying to win someone over, not change their mind.

Step 4. Follow-up your meeting with a letter signed by all attending the meeting thanking the Member for his/her time. You may also wish to send Letters-to-the-Editor of local newspapers thanking the Congressman or Senator for their time. Make sure to send copies of those letters -- both as written and as published -- to the Member of Congress.

Step 5. The Member of Congress should be asked by the meeting attendees to attend a meeting on their terms. Within three weeks after your meeting, invite the Congressman to speak to your activists on the particular issue. Turn-out is crucial. Your activists should have well-thought-out questions ready to ask the Member -- questions that reinforce your position. If possible, make sure the media attends the meeting. This will put additional pressure on the Congressman/Senator to adopt your position.

Step 6. Again, follow-up the meeting with a "Thank You" letter and Letters-to-the-Editor.

Step 7. Conduct a second round of phone calling, following the same procedure as before, as the vote on your issue nears.

1..THE SALUTATION

Dear Senator _____

Dear Representative _____

2..IDENTIFY YOURSELF

State your name and address. Make your legislator aware that you are a constituent. State that you are affiliated with the National Association of Letter Carriers.

4..ASK FOR A RESPONSE

Urge your legislator to take action. Remember to always provide a **POSTAL ADDRESS**, when asking for a reply. Never be abusive or threatening. Always follow up with a letter, to thank or fault them for the action they took.

3..BE SPECIFIC

Identify the bill by its name or number. Be brief-one issue per E-MAIL LETTER. Explain how the issue affects you, your family or your job. Explain how the issue affects others.

5..OTHER TIPS

Be politically active, make yourself aware. You can do this by frequently monitoring this Web Site, as well as the NALC National Bulletin. Be timely; write when the issue is current.

SAMPLE E-MAIL LETTER

To: bbjones@aol.com

CC

Subject: H.R.210, privatization of the U.S Postal Service

Dear Representative Jones,

My name is Murray Carrier of Anytown, Fl. I am a letter carrier for the U.S. Postal Service and a member of the National Association of Letter Carriers. As a constituent of yours, I am writing you about H.R.210, a bill to privatize the Postal Service, sponsored by Rep Phil Crane of Illinois.

I would like you to vote against this bill. A privatized postal service would impair my ability to provide for my family in the manner that we are accustomed. This would also be a disservice to the American Public as well, for the government's duty is to provide a secure public route for communication and commerce to every address in all 50 states, six days a week.

Please let me know of your position on this important issue. I appreciate your consideration and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Murray Carrier
123 Main St.
Anytown Fl. 999911

WRITING YOUR REPRESENTATIVE

Six Simple Steps

1. Address It Correctly

The Honorable _____
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510
Dear Representative _____

The Honorable _____
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510
Dear Senator _____

2. Identify Yourself

State your name, your affiliation with the NALC, and that you are a constituent.

3. Be Specific

Use the bill number if there is one; describe the issue if there is not. If you don't know the bill number, ask your Legislative Liaison

4. Be Timely

Write when the issue is current, and no later than 7-10 days before any action.

5. Explain Your Position

Tell a story about how the issue affects you, your family or your job.

6. Ask for a response

Urge your legislator to take action, and request a reply.

CALLING YOUR REPRESENTATIVE

- Short and Simple
 - Call only when time is short---[one week or less]
 - Identify yourself and your issue
 - Keep your call short
 - Don't argue--politely express your opinion and hang up
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NALC MEMBER:

Hello, I would like to speak to Representative Jones about H.R. 1215, the House Tax Bill.

STAFF MEMBER:

I'm sorry, Mrs. Jones is in a committee meeting right now. May I take a message to give her?

NALC MEMBER:

Yes, my name is Murray Carrier, and I am a letter carrier from Anytown, Fl. NALC Branch 999. I would like Rep. Jones to vote against H.R. 1215 because it would tax postal and federal workers, to pay for tax cuts for the wealthy. Please ask Rep. Jones to contact me about her position on this bill.

STAFF MEMBER:

I will give the message to Rep. Jones and ask her to respond if you will give me your name and address.

NALC MEMBER:

My name is Murray Carrier, and I live at 123 Main Street, Anytown, Fl., 99991. I hope she votes against H.R. 1215, and I will be waiting to hear from her.

STAFF MEMBER:

Thank you for calling.