

## The Art of Talking With Your Legislator

*Emphasize what is known.* Stop leading with unknowns, caveats, and disclaimers. What you start with is what people remember. Give those details later if need be.

*Invert the standard order for reporting.* Start with the main points, then give the background. Say why it matters up front.

*Less is more.* Stick to simple, clear messages about what's important and repeat them often.

*Stop speaking in code.* Choose plain language over technical terms, insider jargon, and acronyms. (Use Fahrenheit if that's what's most familiar to your audience. Human-caused, not anthropogenic.)

### Tips for Lobbying

Determine who specifically has the authority to make a decision concerning your issue (e.g., Senator, Representative, Governor) and then communicate with them in a variety of ways.

- Write letters
- Call the decision-maker(s)
- Send e-mail
- Invite the decision-maker(s) to attend one of your meetings
- Write a letter to the editor
- Ask your friends and family to call or write letters
- Hold a press conference
- Meet personally with the decision maker(s)

If meeting with an elected official, take the following steps:

1. Please note that due to re-modeling at the state capitol, legislative meetings and legislator's offices will likely be in different places than years past. Please call the bill room at 360-786-7573 to locate people and hearing rooms.
2. *Make an appointment in advance.*
3. *Be organized.* Introduce yourself. If you are in a group, select one person to be the primary spokesperson for each issue.
4. *Do not assume that legislators are familiar with your issue.* Recognize that legislators have many issues before them and need to be briefed quickly.
5. *Do your homework:*
  - a. Know your issue. Present the facts in an orderly manner. Do not present purely emotional arguments, but do demonstrate the impact of your issue.
  - b. Know your legislator. Research the background of your elected official(s). What personal interest do they have in your issue?
6. *Determine the legislators' position.* Ask the decision maker(s) for some action or commitment: How will they vote? Will they take a stand for or against a proposal?
7. *Be persistent.* Ask repeatedly until you get an answer.
8. *Allow time for questions.* Encourage questions and answer them factually. If you do not know the answer, offer to find out and get back to the legislator.
9. *Be courteous.* Follow up with a thank you, in which you can restate your position.
10. *Keep in mind that decision makers have many issues to consider every day.* Very few are experts on all issues. They rely upon you to give them good, accurate information, and they are interested in the views of their constituents.