

# How to Lobby

**Start where they are, not where you are** Beginning from a place of understanding is the best way to convince. Your task is to convince your legislator; it's not their job to agree.

**Do your homework** Before contacting legislators, review as much of the available background material on the bill or issue as possible, including its current status in the legislative process.

**Listen carefully** Try to understand their point of view and engage in a dialogue, not a lecture.

**Stay focused on the issue** Keep to the issue or business at hand. Don't spend too much time on social conversation.

**Be positive** You won't always agree, but turning negative during a meeting is a sure way to shut down the dialogue.

**There are no permanent friends and no permanent enemies** Alliances can shift depending on issues. Try to understand your legislators to know when they can be helpful.

**Be sure to have a clear proposal to offer** Give substantive reasons for making changes and factual information to justify your positions if you are proposing amendments to a bill or an alternative solution to a problem.

**Relate examples** Politics are local. Give your legislator examples of how legislation will affect your district.

**Select one or two people to speak** If you have more than two members in your group, select one or two spokespeople.

**Show appreciation for support** It is usually a waste of time (for both of you) to lobby legislators who are in support of your position, although your legislator may be helpful in making suggestions for your lobbying efforts. It does help, however, to let them know you appreciate their support of your position.

**Keep your cool** Try to avoid prolonged or controversial argument. Allow your legislator to express doubts, questions or opinions without interruption. A calm, reasonable attitude and well-prepared reasons for your position may change minds.

**Know when to stop** Sometimes you won't convince your legislator that you're right. Recognize the impasse and move on.

ALASKA COUNCIL



OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS