

## Handouts

November 10, 2011

# LOBBYING 101 HELPFUL WEBSITES AND RESOURCES

## CONGRESSIONAL CONTACT INFORMATION

**Contacting the Congress** is a very up-to-date citizen's congressional directory for the **112th Congress**. As of October 17, 2011 there are 539 electronic contact addresses (of which 536 are Web-based contact forms), and 540 home pages known for the 540 members of the **112th Congress**. Traditional ground mail addresses are available for all current members of Congress.

<http://www.contactingthecongress.org>

### Current Congressional Leadership

<http://www.contactingthecongress.org/cgi-bin/leadership.cgi?site=etc2011>

## "Non-Partisan" Sites with Congressional Information

There are several other online services designed to help you be a more informed constituent and voter. Here is a list of some services (with an effort to use only non-partisan sources):

### Voting Histories/Recent Activities of Congressmembers:

- THOMAS: Legislative Information on the Internet The official source of information from the U.S. Congress.
- Senate Roll Call Votes: This is where you can look up the voting records on floor votes for every member of the Senate.
- U.S. House of Representatives Roll Call Votes: The place to look up the floor votes in the House.
- Project Vote Smart WWW Homepage lists full voting records and ratings by political groups (on both the left and right of the political spectrum) of members of Congress.
- Voter Information Services (VIS) provides ratings on Congressmembers based on their voting records compared to the beliefs of certain groups. VIS itself claims to be non-partisan.
- Political Moneyline: Since money can influence politicians in very shady ways, I have included for your perusal this link to a non-partisan page listing lots on information about Federal candidates and their contributors.

## **Other Sites with Contact Information for Congress members:**

- FirstGov: The Federal Government attempt to keep track of its own websites.
- Government Resources on the Web: Put together by Grace York at the U Michigan Documents Center, this site is a very, very complete listing of Government information available on the Net. Use it to find almost anything about anybody or any agency in the U.S. Government and some foreign ones.

## **Sites specializing in Political News:**

- Roll Call is "the newspaper of Capitol Hill since 1955." They offer news from the Hill everyday, usually in a long, more detailed format than available in your standard newspaper.
- The Hill: "The Capitol Newspaper" provides weekly in-depth stories on the activities of the denizens of Capitol Hill.
- C-SPAN WWW Homepage: The first major television network dedicated solely to covering Politics.

## **State-level Government Information:**

- For a quick and easy list of State Governors' WWW sites and email addresses, check out UMich Documents Center Governor Email Addresses and WWW sites list, provided by Grace York.
- Project Vote Smart provides lots of State-level Government information (which I link to on the individual state pages on this site).

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## **Miscellaneous but Interesting Sites Related To Federal Politics:**

- U. S. Founding Documents: Contains copies of the Original U.S. Constitution and U.S. Declaration of Independence and other Founding documents for the United States in almost every format imaginable.

## **Media Information Sources**

- National Public Radio (NPR) <http://www.npr.org>
- British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) <http://www.bbc.co.uk>
- *The Economist*
- Public Policy Matters <http://publicpolicymatters.com/09-20klm.html>
- Wall Street Journal
- Washington Post
- New York Times
- Comedy - John Stewart's "The Daily Show"



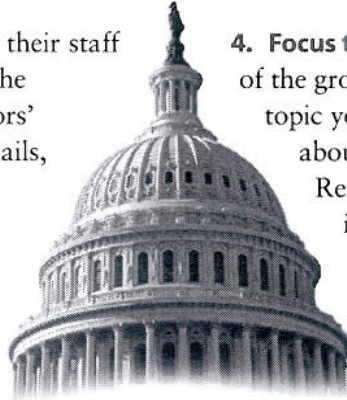
# Eight Tips for a Successful Lobby Visit

Meeting with your members of Congress or their staff and developing a personal relationship are the most effective ways to influence the legislators' positions on an issue. Phone calls, faxes, emails, and letters are all important but are not as effective as meeting with your members of Congress or their staff.

**1. Make an appointment.** Schedule the lobby visit in advance; don't just show up. A broad-based delegation of constituents (five is ideal) increases the likelihood of getting a meeting with the legislator rather than his or her staff. Fax the scheduler with your written meeting request (who, where, when, and why), and follow up with a phone call. Many offices ignore a request for meeting with their member of Congress if it's not made in writing. Use your company or organization's letterhead when faxing the request and mention that you will put a picture of your legislator meeting with you on your group's website. If your lobby visit is in Washington, DC, you should ask to meet with at least a legislative assistant.

**2. Prepare for the lobby visit.** Information on your legislator's co-sponsorship of bills and previous votes is available at [www.fcnl.org](http://www.fcnl.org) (click on "Contact Congress" in the left column and then enter your zip code). You can also find valuable personal information about your legislator on his or her home page by following the links from "Contact Congress." Have a face-to-face pre-meeting with your delegation to determine who will cover which points and who is going to "chair" the meeting to keep it on topic.

**3. Be punctual and positive.** Be on time, and thank the staff person for his or her time. Even if you disagree on most issues, compliment the member of Congress for a vote or action you appreciated. Building rapport with staff is important in developing a long-term relationship.



**4. Focus the meeting.** Briefly introduce the individuals of the group, the organizations you represent, and the topic you wish to discuss. It is important to talk about only one issue and to stay on this topic. Remember, you don't have to be an expert on an issue; members of Congress meet with you because you elect them.

**5. Listen and gather information.** Ask for your legislator's view on an issue. Be patient and passionate; don't react angrily if you don't get the response you want. Remain polite.

**6. Make a specific request.** Rather than something generic like "I want you to support the environment," a more effective "ask" is to request support for a specific bill or legislative action: "I would like Congressman Doe to support H.R. 1234, the Tree Planting Act." Give several brief points why your member of Congress should support this legislation. Avoid a long philosophical debate about the issue; be concrete.

**7. Follow up.** Tell the staff person you will get back to him or her if you can't provide information about an issue on the spot. If the staff person is unfamiliar with a bill or is unsure of the legislator's position, ask for follow-up correspondence. Leave one or two pages of relevant material.

**8. Express your thanks.** At the end of the meeting, thank the staff person for his or her time. Send a thank you letter to the staff person soon after your visit, repeating your "ask." This letter helps to build a relationship over time with a member of Congress and her or his staff.

It often takes several meetings with a member of Congress or his or her staff to influence legislative action. A lobby visit is important to establish a relationship with a congressional office and to get congressional attention on an issue, but make sure to follow up with phone calls, faxes, emails, and letters to the editor.

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