

How to be a Citizen Lobbyist

Introduce Yourself

Legislators welcome the opportunity to hear from their constituents, at all times of the year, not just during the legislative session. You can introduce yourself and develop a relationship with your legislator. The first step in this process is to find your legislator.

Do this by going here:

<http://www.le.utah.gov/GIS/findDistrict.jsp>

Remember that legislators are "citizen legislators." They are your neighbors and friends. Many legislators have full-time jobs in their communities. They are farmers, nurses, teachers, and lawyers. Elected officials are people just like you and they want to hear your opinions and views. Remember, "citizen legislators work for you...their constituents.

Call Your Legislator

Each legislator lists contact information so that you can call them either at their office, at the state capitol or at home. Legislators pay attention to phone calls which are either FOR or AGAINST an issue.

To find your representative's contact information, go to the link below:

<http://www.utah.gov/government/legislative.html>

To find your senator's contact information go to the link below:

<http://www.utah.gov/government/legislative.html>

There are 4 times you may want to call your legislator:

1. To set an appointment to meet with your legislator
2. Once a bill has been filed.
3. To find out your legislator's position on a bill.
4. Right before a vote.

The Phone Call

- ❑ Phone calls are most useful when a vote has been scheduled and there isn't time for a letter or a visit.
- ❑ Phone calls will most likely be received by office staff who will pass on your message on to the legislator
- ❑ Give your name and address to verify that you live in the elected official's district.
- ❑ Cover one subject/topic per call.
- ❑ Keep your phone call short and simple;

"I support/don't support (bill name/number) because (list 2-3 bullet points), and I urge (legislator's name) to vote against/for this bill."

- ❑ If you are calling to request information about the legislator's position, your call will likely be transferred to the staff person/intern working with the legislator. If the staff person doesn't know the position, ask them to find out and get back to you.

"I am interested in finding out (Legislator's name) position on (bill name/number), could you please get that information for me and call or email me back? Thank you."

- ❑ If the issue isn't pending, it is still important to be brief and concise in you conversation. Be prepared to state your position, what you want the legislator to do, and be ready to back up your position with one or two supporting arguments.

" I understand that (bill name/number) might be introduced during this legislative session. I support/ don't support (bill name/number) because (list 2 to 3 bullet points), and I urge (legislator's name) to vote for/against this bill."

- ❑ Follow up! When you receive a reply by phone or email, **thank the staff person** for getting back to you, even if the information is bad news.

Send an Email

Communication before, during, and after the legislative session is important! Your Elected Officials are interested in hearing what you have to say. Make sure that you don't wait until the legislative session to express your ideas, you have the right to lobby your legislators year round.

To find your legislator's email address visit:

For **Senators:**

<http://www.utahsenate.org/asp/roster.aspx>

For **Representatives:**

<http://le.utah.gov/house2/representatives.jsp>

EMAIL EXAMPLE---Introducing yourself

Dear (legislator's name),

My name is (your name) and I wanted to introduce myself to you as one of your constituents. I live in (name your neighborhood) and I am interested in (meeting with you in person, talking with you about some concerns, how you may vote on a bill, etc.)

Thank you for taking the time to read my email. If you would like to contact me, please feel free to email me at (email address) or I can be reached by phone at (phone number).

*Sincerely,
(Your name)*

EMAIL EXAMPLE---Lobbying

Dear (legislators name),

My name is (your name) and I am one of your constituents. I understand that (bill name/number) might be introduced during this legislative session. I support (bill name/number), because (list 2-3 bullet points), and I urge (legislator's name) to vote for this bill.

*Thank you for your time,
(Your Name)*

OR

Dear (legislators name),

My name is (your name) and I am one of your constituents. I understand that (bill name/number) might be introduced during this legislative session. I do not support (bill name/number), because (list 2-3 bullet points), and I urge (legislator's name) to vote against this bill.

*Thank you for your time,
(Your Name)*

General Lobbying Tips

- ❑ Group efforts make lobbying less scary
- ❑ Always be courteous.
- ❑ Personalize the issue—tell a story and how it affects you!
- ❑ Always follow up
- ❑ Empathy is your best tool of persuasion

Preparing for the Lobby Visit

- ❑ Have a plan
- ❑ Look on www.le.state.ut.us and get to know your legislator. Find out about their political party, how long they have been in office, what their interests are, what committees they have sat on, and where they work.
- ❑ Know what you want to discuss-have 3-4 talking points
- ❑ Personalize the issue whenever possible—let them know that their decisions affect real people

How to Personalize the Issue

- Write down your own story in relationship to the legislation.
- After writing your story, break it down into 3-4 talking points.
“If (bill number) does not pass, my family will be affected because of (A, B,C).”
- Pass your talking points on to your family members and ask them to call their elected officials and pass on their information

Schedule an Appointment

1. Call your legislator's office and ask to speak with the legislator or the scheduler. Be specific about your reason for wanting the appointment so that the person with whom you meet is familiar with your issue. If you are asked your position on the issue, tell them. It is better that they know ahead of time what to expect.

If speaking with the legislator:

"Hello, I would like to set an appointment to meet with you regarding (issue/bill name). Do you have time to meet with me this week/month?"

If speaking to the scheduler:

"Hello, I would like to set an appointment to meet with (legislator's name) regarding (issue/bill name). Do they have time to meet with me this week/month?"

2. Sometimes you will meet with the legislator's staff. This is very common since lawmakers have many duties to perform. **Treat the staff as though they were the legislator**
 - Arrive 10 minutes before the meeting.
 - Dress in business casual attire.
 - Have your thoughts written down in a concise manner..2-3 major points.
3. Keep your request or time brief. Ten minutes is a long time to discuss your views. Your respect for their time will be appreciated and remembered next time you want access.

The Office Lobby Visit:

1. Dress appropriately, as if you are going to a business appointment. We encourage you to be yourselves, so whatever you consider to be respectful...that would be appreciated.
2. Bring a friend. Depending on the issue, consider bringing someone who is known to that elected official (someone who regularly works with that office, is an important supporter or contributor, a religious ally). If you do bring someone, tell the office in advance, as this allows the office to be prepared.
3. Start positively. Thank the elected official for meeting with you, introduce yourself/yourselves, identify where you are from.
4. Know your agenda and stick to it. Identify the purpose of your visit. What bill/issue are you here to speak about and what do you want the legislator to do? Outline the specific issues that you want to address.
5. Listen to the elected official---what you learn about their thinking is important. Ask questions that require specific answers. Elected officials may try to shift the conversation to a more comfortable topic. Keep returning to your central message and purpose.
6. Tell the elected official your personal history, and then provide the legislator with copies of fact sheets Planned Parenthood has provided.
7. Make a specific request of support.
8. Tell the truth: if you don't know an answer, say so. Don't inflate your political clout or threaten not to vote for the official in the next election.
9. Acknowledge the possible political risks. Help the elected official develop bridge-building messages that can speak to the majority of constituents.
10. If you hit a brick wall during the visit, accept it. After the meeting, brainstorm creative solutions.
11. End on a positive note; review any agreements or requests for information.
12. Thank the elected official for the meeting.

After the meeting

1. Always follow up. Send a thank you letter/email restating any agreements or requests and thanking them again for their time.
2. Let Planned Parenthood know what you think. Your insight to these legislators and their motivations and beliefs can be very valuable to us.

The Session Lobby Visit

Senate (located upstairs on the third floor/north side of the Capitol building)

1. Go to the Sergeant at Arms desk that is located outside the Senate Chamber.
2. Ask the Sergeant at Arms (men in maroon coats) for a blue slip.
3. Fill out the blue slip with any of the following messages:

If you don't want to speak in person to your Senator:

- a. *My name is (your name) and I am a constituent in your district. I urge you to vote (for/against) on (bill name/number) because: (insert 2 to 3 bullet points). My phone number is (insert phone number). Thank you for your time.*

If you do want to speak in person to your Senator:

- b. *Write the exact time at the top of the slip. "My name is (your name) and I am a constituent in your district. I want to talk to you about (bill name/number). I am waiting in the lobby for the next (insert time frame). I am wearing (describe clothing).*

House (located upstairs on the third floor/west side of the Capitol building)

1. Go to the Sergeant at Arms desk that is located outside the Senate Chamber.
2. Ask the Sergeant at Arms (men in green coats) for a green slip.
If you don't want to speak in person to your Representative:

- c. *My name is (your name) and I am a constituent in your district. I urge you to vote (for/against) on (bill name/number) because: (insert 2 to 3 bullet points). My phone number is (insert phone number). Thank you for your time.*

If you do want to speak in person to your Representative:

- d. *Write the exact time at the top of the slip. "My name is (your name) and I am a constituent in your district. I want to talk to you about (bill name/number). I am waiting in the lobby for the next (insert time frame). I am wearing (describe clothing)*

Tips

- Make sure that you know what your legislator looks like because once they walk out they are often swarmed with lobbyists.
- Give the legislator time to come out. Many times they may be in the midst of a vote or debate.
- Representatives are more likely to leave the floor than Senators.

Tips for Letter Writing

As constituents, it is important to stay in written contact with your elected officials. Elected officials use letters as one way to measure public opinion in their district. Their offices count the pieces of mail FOR and AGAINST every issue.

Content

- State your name. Tell them you are the elected officials constituent. Tell them your position and exactly what you want the legislator to do in your first paragraph.
- Cover ONE subject per letter; write more than one letter if you have multiple issues.
- If the issue can be identified by bill name & number, include it.
- Describe the legislation and how it affects you. Tell your own experiences, elected officials do want to know how a bill or proposal will affect the lives of their constituents.
- Have clear talking points.
- If you know the position taken by your legislative representative, include it, as this demonstrates to the legislator that you are serious and are keeping a close watch on the progress of the bill. You can find this information by going here:
<http://le.utah.gov/asp/interim/Main.asp>
- Request a reply. You are more likely to receive a reply if you ask for one.
- If you receive a reply that supports your position, write back and thank your elected official.
- If you receive a reply that does not support your position, write and explain your position again to the elected official, help them better understand your concerns.
- Always thank the elected official for their time in responding to you.

Format

- Type written letters, when possible, are easier to read. Neatly hand-written letters will work as well. Type or write clearly.
- Be brief and concise, keep it to one page.
- If you need to, send background materials or talking points as attachments to the letter.

Tone & Demeanor

- Avoid deeply emotional demands or threats.
- Try not to scold, put down, or insult, this will likely alienate them from your cause.

SAMPLE LETTERS—

Introducing Yourself

Dear (legislators name),

My name is (your name) and I wanted to introduce myself to you as one of your constituents. I live in (name your neighborhood) and I am interested in (meeting with you in person, talking with you about some concerns, how you may vote on a bill etc.)

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter. If you would like to contact me please feel free to call me at (phone number).

*Sincerely,
(Your Name)*

Supportive of Legislation

Dear (legislators name),

My name is (your name) and I am a constituent in your district. I am supportive of (bill name/number) and I urge you to vote in favor of it. If (bill name/number) passes, it will have a direct impact on my family.

(List how it will affect you and your family).

I urge you to vote yes for (bill/number). Thank you for your time.

*Sincerely,
(Your Name)*

Not Supportive of Legislation

Dear (legislators name),

My name is (your name) and I am a constituent in your district. I do not support (bill name/number) and I urge you to vote against it. If (bill name/number) passes, it will have a direct impact on my family.

(List how it will affect you and your family).

I urge you to vote no for (bill/number). Thank you for your time.

*Sincerely,
(Your Name)*

Your Participation in Committee Meetings Makes a Difference

- ❑ Committee meetings are open to the public.
- ❑ Public testimony can influence the committee's actions and will become part of the permanent record.
- ❑ Agendas are posted 24 hours in advance of the meeting outside of the committee rooms at the Capitol. They can also be found at the legislative home page at www.le.state.ut.us.

Be Familiar with the Committee Process

- ❑ Know the meeting time and location, these can be found on the agenda.
- ❑ Be flexible – assume the meeting will take longer than the scheduled time.
- ❑ Before arriving to the meeting, check to make sure that the issue you are following has not been rescheduled for a different room or time.
- ❑ The bill or issue that you are interested in may not be heard first. Check the agenda to see what time and which committee will be hearing the bill.
- ❑ If you can, attend other committee meetings before you plan to testify so that you see the process ahead of time.

Know the Issue

- ❑ Before you go to a public hearing, know the members on the committee in front of which you will speak. Find out members' predispositions about the issue. Know your allies in the room. You can find out how the members have voted on similar issues by going to www.le.state.ut.us.
- ❑ If you are part of a group, determine who will speak and what they will say before entering the committee room. Strive to make one point without repeating what other speakers have said.
- ❑ Have knowledge about the "other side of the story." You may be asked questions about the differences.

How to be an Effective Witness at a Public/Committee Hearing

ALWAYS—

- ❑ Dress appropriately. Committee members will be in suits or business attire. Please dress in a respectful, professional manner.
- ❑ Identify and qualify yourself.
 - When you first come in, check for a signup sheet for individuals that are interested in testifying in front of the committee. If you wish to testify, make sure that you sign the sheet upon walking into the room.
 - When the committee gets to your name on the signup sheet they will ask you to come up and sit at a table facing the legislators in the middle of the room with a microphone. Or, they may open the meeting to public comment and ask for interested parties to sit at the table.
 - Give copies of your testimony to the committee staff before you begin your presentation. Elected officials have a lot of material to read, so long documents are not effective.
 - Refrain from reading word for word. Summarize, or use a script.
 - Begin your speech by stating your name, where you are from and who you represent.
 - **Always address the chair of the committee. Begin with “Mr. Chair/Madame Chair and members of the committee...”**
 - Be prepared to summarize your testimony in one minute—that may be all the time you are given to speak.
 - Be prepared for questions for clarification. If you do not know the answer to a question, you should say, “I will find that out and get you that information.”
 - When a member asks you a question, respond: “Chair (last name) or Senator/Representative (Last name), the answer is...”
 - Leave your seat when you are dismissed by the chair and ALWAYS thank the committee for their time.
 - Relax!

NEVER--

- ❑ **Never threaten committee members.** Refrain from saying things like:

"I will make sure you will not be reelected if you don't vote the way I want you to"

"You never do anything to help"

- ❑ **Never get angry.** Stay calm, even when others, including the committee member, do not. It is OK to be nervous. It is not OK to be angry.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

Your elected officials are citizens of Utah, just like you!

There is no wrong way to lobby if you stay on message!

Practice what you want to say with family and friends first before you go to your elected officials!

Everyone in a democratic society has the right to participate in government and require accountability from their elected officials!

Your voice matters and you have the tools, talents, and capabilities to address your concerns and expectations with your elected officials!