Tips for Effective Grassroots Lobbying

PLAN THE MEETING IN ADVANCE. Have a written agenda with speaking roles for attendees. Prepare attendees by role-playing or considering likely scenarios. The meeting should generally follow these steps: 1) introduce yourself (name, volunteer with Stand, if you are a parent in their District); 2) your specific purpose today 3) tell your story; 4) ask them for questions 5) make a clear ask of the decision maker 6) provide short (preferably 1-page) handout, 7) follow up if they need more information

DO YOUR HOMEWORK. You should have a thorough understanding of the issue, along with a basic understanding of the decision maker’s district, background and priorities. The more you know, the greater your effectiveness. However, your main strength comes from your role as a GROUP of parents in their District with a passionate concern. This is generally more important than being an expert.

BE RESPECTFUL. The decision maker may not agree, or be ready to decide on the spot. Respect their position. Allow time to sincerely LISTEN to their questions and/or concerns. Appreciate that they are juggling many issues, and may face many proposals each year. Never threaten. Don’t burn bridges. You will likely need to work together again in the future.

BE DIRECT. You have every right to ask the person to act. Do not allow them to simply avoid your ask.

KEEP THE MEETING ON TRACK. You have limited time. Do not get sidetracked onto other issues. Do not leave without making your key points and your ask. Respectfully steer the conversation back to the topic at hand.

GIVE EXAMPLES. Decision makers won’t be familiar with every issue. Give them more than just data—give them moving, personal stories, that encourage an emotional investment in your issue(s).

DON’T ARGUE. If you find yourself in a disagreement, don’t get in an argument. Your responsibility is to present your case, not necessarily to win it.

HAVE A CLEAR ASK. Know your specific ask in advance. What do you want the School Board or legislator to do? Vote ‘Yes’ or ‘No’? Hold a meeting? Persuade a colleague? Have a response prepared for various replies. If they support your cause, ask them for additional help, say, persuading a reluctant colleague to sign-on. If they oppose your cause, ask them what might change their minds. If they’re non-committal, ask them what they need to know and/or when they will likely make a decision.

FOLLOW UP. If you don’t know the answer to a question, promise to get them the information, and follow through! Stay in touch with the decision makers in-between meetings. Keep them informed on your issues and/or any changes to the bill(s). Building a long-term relationship will ease access and communication.

Find your state legislator at [http://www.oregonlegislature.gov/FindYourLegislator/leg-districts.html](http://www.oregonlegislature.gov/FindYourLegislator/leg-districts.html)