



HousingMinnesota

Homes For All

Citizen Lobbying Tips

One-on-one conversations can be a very effective means of conveying the message of affordable housing.

Read through this list to get pointers on effective lobbying. Lobbying isn't a bad thing- in fact it's very important in that legislators often get major pieces of information about issues from lobbyists. You are very powerful and somewhat special as a lobbyist: you are a voting constituent. Legislators listen to you because your vote matters to their future job prospects. Not only that, but you gave them this opportunity to serve the public, give them the chance to do just that by visiting with them and expressing your views.

1. Remember that legislators are human beings. Dress respectfully, be punctual, start your meeting with a compliment (if possible), be friendly and polite, and thank the legislator for taking the time to meet with you.
2. Never lie or make up information- your credibility will be forever lost. If you do not know the answer to a legislator's question, tell them you will find out and get back to them, and then DO IT!
3. Introduce yourself and tell the legislator what group(s) you are representing (if any).
4. Treat legislative staff with respect- they are not just the gatekeepers, but their opinions often weigh heavily with the legislator.
5. Provide a short fact sheet on your issue, but don't weigh them down with too much paper.
6. Try to put your issue in the context of the legislator's own district.
7. Assume support, but press for an explicit commitment. Polite nods are meaningless.
8. Allow the legislator a chance to respond, listen carefully to their advice, and don't interrupt.
9. Be understanding of the complex pressures upon legislators.
10. Never criticize another legislator, lobbyist, or the opposition.
11. Don't burn bridges unnecessarily.
12. Send a written follow-up note thanking the legislator again and summarize any action items from the meeting.