

Grassroots Advocacy

Here a few tips that will help you be a successful grassroots advocate. First and foremost, you don't have to be an expert to speak with your Indiana state Representatives and Senators. Whether it is lobbying to get a child to clean their room, the boss for a raise, a co-worker to help out on a project – **we all lobby to get things we want**. We list the arguments for our position, we point out the problems with the other side's arguments. **All of this is lobbying. Your viewpoint is important and worth expressing.**

- Develop a relationship with your legislator when the General Assembly is not in session. This is before you need to **ask** for something during a legislative session. Ask them to visit your library.
- Ask politely for a **short appointment** – **10 to 15 minutes** during the session. The meeting can be held in your library, at a local restaurant for coffee or at the State House.
- Your maximum influence comes in addressing your comments directly to your own legislator.
- Whether making the contact in person or in writing, address the Senator or Representative properly. Letters should be addressed as follows:
 - The Honorable (Insert Name)
 - Indiana House of Representatives (or Indiana State Senate)
 - State House, 200 W. Washington Street
 - Indianapolis, IN 46204
- **Identify yourself** immediately at each contact. Public officials meet too many people to remember everyone.
- Establish your own credentials or expertise on the subject of legislation under consideration.
- Say exactly what you want the legislator to do – using your own words or language prepared by your advocacy organization (ILF). If your issue involves legislation, cite the specific bill's name or number during the times the General Assembly is in session.
- Answer any questions concisely – if more detail is wanted, the legislator will ask for it. Be honest and direct. Do not be afraid to admit you do not know all the answers.
- Take the time to become familiar with the differing views and perspectives on the bill. When speaking with your representative, acknowledge them and offer comments that **compare or contrast** your position and the other positions. **Remember, for every issue, there are many different views, none of which is absolutely correct.** Compromise.
- Once you have presented your case, be polite and listen to what the legislator has to say.
- Be prepared to leave on time (unless the legislator keeps the conversation going).
- The better organized and shorter the presentation, the easier follow-up appointments will be.
- Use bullet points in any printed material you bring and leave it with the legislator when you leave.
- Follow up on the visit with a timely hand written thank-you note and include the bullet point materials. This gives you another chance to make your point.
- After the meeting, promptly send any information you promised during the meeting.
- Do not continue to call the legislator after your meeting. Be sure to leave the best way for your legislator to call/write/email you.