



LOBBYING 101: A guide to your first meeting with your legislator

So, you care about wildlife in Oregon and want to advocate for good law and policy? One key way you can make a difference is by meeting face to face with your elected officials and talking to them about the issues that matter most to you.

Your voice matters! But it can be confusing or even intimidating to figure out where to start. One way to begin is to sign up for an organized lobby day like the one Oregon Wild puts on every year. Or you could read up on the issues online and set up your own meeting independently.

This guide will walk you through the process of preparing for and executing your very first meeting with your legislator.

Before the Meeting:

- Determine the bill or issue on which you will lobby.
 - If you have a group, it's a good idea to meet in advance to discuss the issue and make sure you are all on the same page.
 - If you are on your own, read up on the issues online (you can find handy resources in the Wild Ones Activist Toolkit) and decide what you want to focus on.
- Define your "ask".
 - This is a yes/no question that sums up your visit.
 - Can I count on you to vote YES on Bill X?
 - Will Senator Y vote NO on Bill Z?
 - Develop a fallback "ask".
 - Draft a simple page of talking points for you and/or your group.
- If attending with a group, divide the roles of the meeting.
 - Important roles include:
 - Person who introduces the issue
 - Person who presents the argument for your "ask"
 - Person who makes the "ask"
 - Person who takes notes and records the meeting
 - Person who answers any questions outside the realm of Person A or B
 - Depending on the size of your group, you may have to double up on roles or not everyone will get to talk.
 - Rehearse your roles if necessary.
- Schedule the meeting.
 - Use the legislator lookup tool to figure out who your elected officials are.
 - Contact their offices directly by phone or email to set up a meeting time.
 - If you are attending an organized lobby day, this will already be done for you.
- Arrange to gather at the meeting location 30 minutes prior to your appointment. This will allow you time to review your notes and talking points. Make sure to have a camera ready for photo ops.

During the Meeting:

- General Guidelines:
 - Arrive early.
 - Be polite, professional, and organized.
 - Be aware of distracting conversation, and politely bring it back to the issue at hand.
 - Be polite and respectful of everyone in the group and give everyone a chance to speak.
 - Personal stories are more likely to engage the staffer or official than reciting stats.
 - Be direct and succinct.
- Introductions:
 - Wait till seated, and then everyone in the group should introduce themselves.
 - Don't be afraid to start with small talk to break the ice.
- Format:
 - Person A introduces the issue.
 - Person B makes the case for your ask.
 - Person C makes the ask.
 - If you get a “no” answer, go to your follow-up ask. Question the official or staffer you are meeting with as to what changes would be needed for them to support the bill. If the staffer says they need to “check with their boss” (the official) then make sure to follow up via phone call (see below.)

Post-Meeting

- Write a thank you note/email to the person you met with. Make sure to offer to answer any questions they may have about your issue or any other health or education related topic.
- Have a quick debrief meeting immediately after your appointment.
 - Discuss how it went, and exchange contact information.
 - If additional information was requested, be sure to follow up by sending it promptly.
 - Designate one person to follow up via phone call one week later. In this call you will remind the staffer/official of your meeting, thank them again, and re-iterate your ask.
- If your issue is focused on a particular bill, track your bill online using the Oregon Legislative Information System (OLIS) to see how it is moving through the process.