



## How to Have a Great Lobby Meeting

### Tips for a Successful Lobby Meeting

- **Try to be on time.** If others from your group aren't there, go in anyway. It's better if one person is late than the whole group.
- **Introduce yourself with some context.** Reference any affiliations you might have in your community – member of the PTA, president of a hunting club, on the library board, etc.
- **Some chit chat is great, but there is such a thing as too much.** Chit chat is how you establish rapport, so it's definitely a good thing to pursue. Just be mindful of the time. Your 30 minute meeting will go *fast*. Don't lose sight of the fact that you came to Madison to talk about your conservation concerns.
- **Be organized.** During lunch, decide who will talk on each issue. If you have a large number of people, the reality is that you won't all be able to talk about all four issues. During lunch, share your stories about why you came to Lobby Day and, as a group, decide which stories will be the best to share with the legislator.
- **Lead with our issues.** The four issues were specifically selected because we have the best opportunity to influence them within the budget. Plus, your fellow citizen lobbyists came to Madison to discuss those issues. If you have other things on your mind, consider following-up with your legislator by phone or arranging for an in-district meeting.
- **Share your stories.** You don't need to be a policy expert! Help the legislator attach a human face to the conservation issues being raised. Explain why you are concerned and what impacts you anticipate on your family and community. If a photo helps illustrate your point (a favorite state park or a lake overrun with pollution), bring it to share.
- **Be respectful.** No matter what happens in your meeting, be respectful. You want to leave the legislator's office with the ability to always be welcomed back.
- **Schedule a follow-up meeting.** Consider setting up a follow-up visit with the legislator before you leave their office. One of the staff should be able to set up a time for you (and others) to meet with the legislator in-district to follow up on your conversation. Previous Conservation Lobby Day participants have had great success with this approach.
- **Take a selfie.** Ask the staffer to take a picture of the group with the legislator. It helps end the meeting on a fun note. Please share your photo on Facebook (/conservationvoters) and Twitter (@wiconservation) – be sure to tag Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters! – or email it to us at [photos@conservationvoters.org](mailto:photos@conservationvoters.org). We might use your photo in an upcoming email or newsletter!

## **How to Handle Some Common Lobby Meeting Situations**

**What if my legislator isn't there?** We picked April 14th because it is a day when the Legislature is "in-session," which means legislators are more likely to be at the Capitol (as opposed to in their district) and able to meet with their constituents. There is a chance that your legislator will be in a committee meeting or on the floor during your meeting time. We've taken every precaution to make sure this isn't the case, but sometimes that's how it goes. If that is the case, you will meet with a staff person who will take detailed notes. The staff person may also take you to meet the legislator. If you do end up meeting with just the staff person, it's important to recognize the significance of that opportunity. Legislative staff are a trusted resource for the legislator. Your discussion with the staff will certainly still influence your legislator.

**What if my legislator is focused on something other than one of the four conservation issues?** (i.e. Have I told you about my bill to make Oscar the Grouch the Official Sesame Street Character of Wisconsin?) Politely but firmly, take the conversation back to the conservation issues with an approach like, "We'd like to find a time to learn more about that. At today's meeting however, we came to talk about our shared support of these four conservation issues."

**What if my legislator asks me something I don't know?** This is not a problem at all. You should feel perfectly confident answering with something like, "That is a great question. I don't know the answer to that, but I am going to make sure we get one of the professional staff to follow-up with you and get you an answer as soon as possible." Someone in your meeting should make sure to write down the question on the lobby reporting form and we'll follow up with that office. Then transition back to why you are concerned about this issue.

**What if my legislator says they can't do anything without seeing amendment language or without knowing exactly how we will pay for it?** This answer shouldn't prevent you from getting a sense of where they are on the issue. Try a response like, "I understand that your official position will depend on reading the language but in general, could you support the key positions that we have laid out here?"

**What if my legislator has excuses – they say they can't do anything because they are in the minority party, not on the committee, etc.?** In order for a budget to become law, they will have to take a position at some point, so try an approach like, "I understand that legislators have different roles in the process, but as our legislator do you support this program?"

**What if my legislator totally disagrees with us on the issue?** Don't beat a dead horse. Move to the next issue with a transition like "I appreciate that we can't always agree on everything. We hope that you will keep our concerns in mind. The next issue we'd like to talk to you about is X."

**What if my legislator claims my group is too liberal/conservative/urban/rural/etc.?** "While we are all members of different groups with different interests, the great thing about the conservation community and the issues that we are focusing on today is that they are the *shared* priorities of conservation groups around the state. Each of those groups has different constituencies, focus, and geographic reach. Our issues have widespread political and popular support."

**What if my legislator says that this issue isn't going to be changed in the budget?** This is a great opportunity to get more info. Ask, "Why do you say that?" Follow-up with, "While we know there isn't a lot of time left in the budget deliberations, we know that legislators are able to accomplish a lot in a short amount of time if there is the political support to make it happen. By taking the day off work to be here in support of this issue/program, we hope we are conveying to you that we'd like to see funding for this program/policy directive changed. Can we count on your support to help make that happen?"

**What if my legislator is already a really helpful/enthusiastic supporter?** “It is so great that you are supportive of these issues. We know that the hard work of revising the budget is happening right now. Would you be willing to lend your public support to getting these changes into the budget and making sure members of your caucus also support these changes?”

***Three Rules for Being a Successful Citizen Lobbyist:***

***Be yourself.***

***Be respectful.***

***Stick to what you know.***

**You’re going to do great – thanks so much for being here to advocate for your conservation values!**

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