

Mississippi



Youth & Government

LOBBYIST MANUAL

FOR ADVISORS & LOBBYISTS

MISSISSIPPI YOUTH LEGISLATURE YOUTH LOBBYIST GUIDELINES

What is a lobbyist?

Lobbyists are representatives of special interests and groups that work to PERSUADE legislative delegates to amend, support or oppose bills. Youth lobbyists at the Youth Legislature can be a positive and effective force in getting legislation passed or getting it defeated. It requires hard work and much, much preparation.

The following guidelines have been developed to help you be a successful lobbyist. Follow these guidelines and you will be a SUCCESSFUL LOBBYIST.

1. **BE PREPARED** - know both the pro and con of your position. Knowing how your opponents will attack your position makes you less vulnerable. Also, know where your positions' weaknesses are and be extra prepared to defend them.
2. **KNOW YOUR FACTS** - be truthful about them! If you do not know something, tell the committee that you don't know and offer to try to find out. Above all, maintain your personal integrity:
 - Don't tell half truths;
 - Answer all questions even if the answer is damaging to your position;
 - If you offer an idea as a fact, make sure it is a fact, not just an idea.
3. **DRESS AND CONDUCT** - behave in such a way as to immediately command respect. Dress and conduct must remain like this throughout Youth Legislature since you will be stopped in halls, lobbies, and even elevators.
4. **BE FORCEFUL** - but never arrogant. NEVER talk down to legislators; give them the same respect you desire.
5. **HAVE "FACT SHEETS"** - keep them available for handouts if your position will be helped by such actions. Fact sheets are short, to-the-point statements of facts and statistical figures, **not** long, philosophical inquiries. Be careful of facts; facts are merely a statement of belief within a particular perceptual framework and do not necessarily hold outside those perceptions. Statistics can be even more worthless.
6. **WHEN BEFORE A COMMITTEE** - make your point and stop! Never use two words when one will suffice. Politicians generally appreciate brevity in others. In other words, say what you came to and leave it at that. When questioned, be short, concise and to-the-point.
7. **PREPARE YOUR REMARKS BEFOREHAND** - and have an outline. Have copies with you of all pertinent information such as existing laws, cost benefit analysis, etc., so that you can cite chapter and verse, if necessary. (See "Guide for Writing Speeches or Opposing Bills," page 5).
8. **CONTACT COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS** - all your preparations will be worthless if you don't get to present it. Therefore, be sure you contact each committee chairperson. Do this as soon as you arrive at the Youth Legislature and let them know that you wish to make a presentation before their committees. You may have to juggle schedules with them if two bills are due before committees at the same time.

9. **WORK WITH THE AUTHORS** - on bills you support. You need to have them fully versed with all the data for floor debates. Make any suggestions you can to improve the odds.
10. **IF YOU OPPOSE A BILL** - you have to find several legislators who also oppose it and fill them in so they can lead the floor fight.
11. **NEVER ASSUME** - that a bill has passed until it has the signature of the Youth Governor. Governors can and do veto legislation. They can also be supportive and can request that a bill defeated in committee be brought to the floor. Go to the Governor only as a last resort. **ALWAYS MAKE AN APPOINTMENT** with the Governor. **DO NOT** just "show up."
12. **ALWAYS CARRY** - a note pad and pencil/pen with you. Since you are not allowed on the floor during debates, you will have to communicate with your people on the inside with notes via the pages. Don't overdo it, though. Keep a listing of the names and seat numbers of your key people in your note pad.
13. **KEEP YOURSELF CLEARLY IDENTIFIED** - as a lobbyist throughout the Youth Legislature. Many people will want to know things and it is best when they can find you.

NOW THAT I KNOW WHAT TO DO, WHERE DO I GO FOR HELP?

- a. Read every available printed material on your subject matter.
- b. Talk with experts on the subject.
- c. Do research in libraries.
- d. Get all available data from the Bill author(s).
- e. Contact your local legislator if you need information on the Mississippi Code of 1972.

THE ROLE OF THE LOBBYIST

Lobbyists are representatives of special interests and groups which work to PERSUADE legislative delegates to amend, support or oppose bills. The ways by which lobbyists can persuade other delegates are unlimited. However, the Conference staff will suggest possibilities when they seem appropriate. The following will serve as a general format.

1.COMMUNICATION/INFLUENCE

Lobbyists ask questions of, talk to and listen to other delegates. Lobbyists prepare "media" type props (posters, pictures, displays, fact sheets, newspaper articles, etc.). Visibility is essential. Lobbyists will attempt to influence the Governor and other officials.

2.EXPERTISE/INFORMATION

Because they work on fewer bills, lobbyists often are better prepared on specific issues than legislators or the Governor. This advantage of factual and organizational preparedness not only will make lobbyists effective in swaying delegate opinions, but it will also cause intelligent decision makers to seek them out for information and assistance.

3.COMMITTEE HEARINGS

Lobbyists speak for and against bills in the committee meetings. (They are not members of the Committee and they do not get to vote.) This is an excellent opportunity for lobbyists to influence the legislature. They are allowed 3 minutes per bill, plus a summation speech. Lobbyists should be prepared to solicit and answer questions from committee members.

LOBBYISTS AND LOBBYING

In the press and even in many scholarly works on state government, the terms "lobbyist" or "legislative advocate" are used to identify all of those who influence legislation for pay or on a regular basis as volunteers.

There are several different ways in which lobbyists can be categorized -- based on their incomes, their interests or their methods, for example -- but perhaps the most useful way is according to the interests they represent. At least seven such categories can be identified.

•**Single Private Interest Lobbyists** - Lobbyists who represent a single corporation, industry, or industry association and who usually are experts in the interests they represent.

•**Multiple Interest Lobbyists** - The contract or freelance lobbyists who represent clients in a variety of fields on a fee basis who ordinarily sell their services as expert lobbyists rather than as experts in the interests they represent.

•**Public Utilities Lobbyists** - Utility companies regulated by state agencies have unique legislative concerns stemming from their special relationships to government and their advocates must combine the expertise of the single-interest lobbyists with a detailed knowledge of the rate-setting agencies.

•**Association and Labor Union Lobbyists** - There are a substantial number of lobbyists who represent large statewide groups -- teachers, state employees, voters, nurses, etc. -- who generally have more of a background in the group they represent than in the techniques of influencing legislation, although this is not always true, particularly in the case of labor union lobbyists.

•**Local and Regional Government Lobbyists** - Advocates for cities, counties, associations of city and county officials and such special-purpose bodies and regional agencies as public mass transportation account for a growing proportion of the lobbying corps.

•**State Agencies Lobbyists** - Several state agencies are regularly represented before the legislature by employees who have such titles as "legislative coordinator," "counsel," or "legislative secretary." These lobbyists are not required to register as legislative advocates.

•**Public Interest Lobbyists** - All lobbyists would like to be identified in this category, but it is intended to identify the growing number who represent organizations concerned with protection of the consumer, environment, civil liberties, children and the poor.

Interestingly, the lobbyists themselves often do not recognize these distinctions. When they are competing for the attention of a legislator, presenting opposing cases before a legislative committee, they see their similarities rather than their differences; whoever their employers and whatever tactics they employ, lobbyists see themselves as essential ingredients in the democratic process, communicators of their employers or "clients" concerns to the legislature and administrative agencies.

"Communication is the basic commodity around here," says one salaried lobbyist. "The biggest problem is getting an opportunity to communicate with a legislator. It is increasingly hard to find them in their offices because they are at hearings while the lobbyists are at other hearings, or the legislators are back home campaigning. So you try to get a few minutes in a hallway or at a dinner or luncheon -- grabbing a sandwich, even, because you're both in a hurry. The problem is finding time to make one's concerns known so that they can be dealt with."

Self-serving as it may be, the information that they provide is essential to the legislative process and can help protect the general public against capricious or faulty legislation. Professor Frank Newman of the University of California School of Law in Berkeley emphasized this view in testimony several years ago before a legislative committee. "I think," he said "we would have a healthier government if we had more lobbyists and more groups of our citizens were represented in Sacramento, and I think it's been very healthy in the last decade that we do have more people up here representing more groups."

Similarly, Ralph Nader, in his report on the politics of California land use, argued not for fewer lobbyists for the special interests but for more lobbyists for what he saw as the public interest and more independent staff for the legislators. "The government couldn't possibly function without the inputs provided by skilled advocacy of special interests, be they industrial or otherwise," the report says.

LOBBYISTS' GUIDE FOR WRITING SPEECHES SUPPORTING OR OPPOSING BILLS

1. Read and make sure you understand what the bill will do.
2. Write down your best arguments supporting/opposing the bill. Briefly list the facts, examples and quotations supporting each of your best arguments. Organize your arguments in a logical order. It is recommended that you place your best arguments first.
3. Anticipate the arguments of your opponents. Write down each of their best arguments that you can think of and underneath it write down your response to it.
4. On a separate sheet of paper, begin to outline your speech. Keep in mind that you will only have three minutes (plus summation time) to make your point before the committee. Therefore, you should concentrate on making and supporting only a few major points that will support your position on the bill. (If you have more points to make than you have time to cover, have other lobbyists make some of them for you during their time.)

a. **INTRODUCTION** - State your name, school and town. Tell the committee whether you favor or oppose the bill.

b. **SIGNPOSTING** - State in the order they will be discussed the major points you will be making in your speech.

c. **BODY OF THE SPEECH** - Discuss each major point in turn, developing your support for the point through facts, quotations, stories, examples, etc. The points should then be organized in a logical manner that leads to a conclusion of why the committee should vote the way you suggest. In addition to discussing your best arguments supporting your position, it may be helpful to discuss why the opposition's arguments should not be believed (facts are not correct; conclusions are not logical; etc., or if they are correct and logical, what they say will not have a good effect or is not relevant to the bill.) Refer to any visual aids you have prepared. Be creative and discuss what **you** think is most important.

d. **CONCLUSION** - Tie together your main points in a few sentences and explain why they lead to only one conclusion and that is to vote your way. This is the time to be at your most persuasive. Then thank the committee and, if you wish, leave the remaining time for questions.

There are infinite ways of writing speeches. The above model is merely one general suggestion that should be helpful in organizing most speeches supporting or opposing a bill.

5. Visual aids are very helpful in getting your point across and are encouraged whenever possible. Anything that will help get the attention of the committee members and drive home your points will make you a more effective speaker. Pictures and graphs relevant to your speech help give a visual picture of the problem that will stay in the minds of the committee members. Again be creative.
6. How you deliver your speech is just as important as how well it is written. Be familiar enough with your speech so that you can **tell it** to the committee members rather than just reading it. Put a lot of energy in your delivery and remember to maintain eye contact with the committee members.

TECHNIQUES OF LOBBYING

GOAL

To secure passage, defeat or amendment to a particular bill. All of the activities of the lobbyists are geared to achieving this goal. But how you get there is just as important, if not more so, than achieving legislative success. The key is to learn, help educate others, work well with others and have a great time.

TOOLS

The most important tools of a lobbyist are **credibility, good information and making the best use of his/her own personality.** There is no stereo-typical model for a lobbyist. Lobbyists are most effective when they work hard, are prepared and are friendly. Most importantly, be yourself. If you try, you will accomplish your most important goals. Remember to give the legislators a positive reason to agree with you.

GETTING READY

Before you come to the Youth Legislature, read the bills you have selected and develop a good understanding of them. Do the necessary research to be able to answer the following questions:

1. Do problems exist making the proposed change of law necessary?
2. What changes will the bill make to existing law?
3. Will the bill solve (help solve) the problem? If so, how?
4. What are the arguments supporting the passage of the bill? For defeat?
5. Is the bill well written?
6. What amendments could be written to improve the bill?
7. Do **you** think the bill should be passed?

DOING IT

1. **Prepare a three minute speech** supporting your views and present it at the committee hearing for your bill(s). Speeches should be prepared, if possible, before you come to the Youth Legislature.
2. **Do some real lobbying!** Before the committee hearings, talk to each member of the committee and try to convince them to support your position. Good times to contact Senators and Representatives include:
 - a. Just before the committee meets. Show up early and talk to the members as they arrive until the meeting begins. Be aggressive and approach them.
 - b. If the bill is about to reach the House or Senate, stand in the lobby outside of the chambers before the session begins and talk to the legislators as they arrive.

- c. Find out the hotel room numbers of the legislators you wish to lobby and contact them at the hotel. Make arrangements to meet them to discuss your bill(s).
 - d. Set up a breakfast, lunch, dinner or munchies meeting with a legislator. Use the time to explain your views.
 - e. Almost any time you spot a legislator who will soon be voting on your bill is an appropriate time to lobby him/her. You have to be a little aggressive to get his/her attention, but don't be too pushy. Use your best judgement. Give the legislator good reasons to support your views.
3. Make the bill partly yours **by writing an amendment** to it. Develop arguments why the committee should adopt your amendment. Convince the bill author or some other committee member to introduce your amendment and/or move for its passage. (You cannot do this yourself.) Lobby to get it adopted.
 4. Prepare a handbill explaining your position on your bill(s). Have several copies reproduced and hand them out to committee members and others who will have an effect on passage of the bill. Send a copy to the Youth Governor. Handouts should include the bill number, a brief statement explaining what you would do, your best arguments for passing/defeating it, your name and a list of those agreeing with you. Be creative!
 5. Convince the Youth Legislature press to do an article explaining your views on the bill(s).
 6. Get others to endorse your position on a bill or amendment you have written. Set up meetings with the Youth Governor and other officers to get their support and approval to use their names. If they agree, use their endorsements when you lobby. Get the endorsements of others including the endorsements of delegations.
 7. If you are opposed to a bill that has passed, try to get the Governor to veto it.
 8. Build coalitions. If you are in favor of a bill, talk to the bill proponent and others supporting the bill to see how you can coordinate efforts. If you are opposed to the bill, find others who also oppose it and see if you can work together; working with others is half the fun.

REMEMBER: We can change the law to make this state a better place in which to live. You can make a difference whether good or bad bills are approved. All you have to do is try. Now, GO TO IT!!!