

Basics of Lobbying

It's your right as a citizen of the state to personally lobby your legislators. You don't need any special permission to make your views known. Here are some tips to help with the process.

1. Know the process

Familiarize yourself with the General Assembly's website, www.legis.iowa.gov and go to www.iowacatholicconference.org to learn how bills get written and the process they follow in the legislature. For the status of ICC legislative priorities and news of the current session, sign up for the lowa Catholic Conference newsletter, also at our website.

2. Do your homework

Make sure your conscience is well-formed and the information you present is accurate! The points you make in conversation and the information you present in materials should always be credible.

3. Find help

Find allies on the issue, whether within your church or through contacts with other groups or businesses.

4. Prioritize your contacts and how they will be contacted:

- Personal visits at the Capitol or between sessions
- Forums or "town hall" held by the legislator
- Letters or phone calls

If you decide to make a personal trip to the capitol, these are the basics:

If a time has been set, be on time. Make introductions and a little small talk.

Keep it short and to the subject, not overly technical. Come prepared with three things:

- A brief outline of the issue
- Facts supporting your position
- Specific recommendations for action

After your opening, ask for their position, if any.

Listen!

Leave a one-page fact sheet (have a copy of the bill on hand).

Thank them for their time and end on a good note (You might be back again!).

Take notes right after the meeting when details are still clear.

Follow up on any additional information you need to supply as quickly as possible.

Note: If you are meeting with a legislator as a team, coordinate and assign responsibilities beforehand to avoid confusion.



Additional Helpful Hints

- The best days to make contacts at the statehouse are usually Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday, beginning at about 8:30 a.m.
- The legislative chambers are on the second floor of the capitol. The entrance to the Senate chamber is located on the south side, and the entrance to the House chamber is on the north side. In front of each door is a large board with pictures of all senators or representatives. There is also a desk with a small notepad of slips that are filled out to request a meeting with a senator or representative. Fill out a slip with the information required.
- Note: On the request slip, the number required for a particular legislator is their seat number, not their district number. Their seat number is found on the large picture board located at the chamber entrance.
- After you have completed the slip, submit it to the doorman stationed in front of the entrance. Be conscious of other groups and lobbyists who are also waiting to see legislators.

- If the legislator is unavailable, the doorman or a page will let you know.
 If the schedule of the legislator allows him or her to meet with you, they may arrive shortly after they receive your
- Legislators are happy to meet with you and will appreciate your effort to contact them in person. Their success depends on knowing the thoughts and concerns of their constituents. That said, legislators are busy people and may have only a brief time to talk with you. Make your main points as concise as possible.
- Listen to what the legislator has to say. Be courteous and brief in your conversation. The most important takeaway from your exchange will be the impression you are thoughtful and well informed.

Map of the Second Floor of the Iowa State Capitol Building

Source: Iowa State General Assembly, Legislative Services Agency

