

POWER OF PERSUASION

You don't have to be a professional to lobby. In fact, your input as a constituent can be more persuasive than high-powered lobbyists or donors. Everyone has the right and responsibility to participate in government. Your voice is powerful and important!

As a citizen, you have every right to frequent your State Capitol and interact with those who are making laws that govern you.



Becoming a Liberty Lobbyist is easy and effective when you know the process. This guide will give you the tools to effectively communicate with and persuade your legislator.

ACLU OF MISSISSIPPI
P.O. BOX 2242
JACKSON, MS 39225-2242

FOLLOW US ONLINE



601.354.3408
OFFICE@ACLU-MS.ORG
WWW.ACLU-MS.ORG



A GUIDE TO BEING A
LIBERTY
LOBBYIST

ACLU
Mississippi

WHAT IS LOBBYING?

Lobbying is a tool used to influence elected officials and persuade them to vote in your interest. Lobbying empowers you to make your voice heard on issues that impact your community.

HOW TO LOBBY AT THE CAPITOL

- Locate a staffer (there should be staffers stationed in front of each chamber), or a Page (student volunteer).
- To pull a Legislator from the floor, you will need a note, which can be obtained from the tables near the Chamber entrance.
- Give the note to a Page or staffer, who will then take it to the designated Legislator.
- Once the note has been delivered, the Page/staffer will return to you and inform you as to whether or not the Legislator will come and speak with you.
- Be ready to deliver your 'elevator speech' when you meet with your Legislator.
- Leave your contact information and be sure to follow-up.

THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR STATE CAPITOL

- The Capitol is open Monday-Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- The Mississippi State Capitol is located at 400 High Street, Jackson, MS 39201.
- Visitor parking is available on the Capitol Grounds.
- Find more resources at www.aclu-ms.org:
 - Municipal and Legislative Equity Agendas
 - Legislative Score Card: Find out how your legislator voted on issues of equity and inclusion.
 - Bill Tracking

COMMUNICATING WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS

GENERAL COMMUNICATION RULES:

- Know why you're contacting them.
- Tell them you're a constituent.
- Refer to the Bill number (HB or SB__) and a brief description of the issue.
- Outline your talking points; set goals.
- Be concise and to the point. Make your ask! ("Please vote for/against...")

MEETING FACE-TO-FACE

- Prepare your game plan.
- Request a meeting in writing with specific times.
- Confirm by phone call, email, or both.
- Plan the meeting. If bringing others, plan who will say what.

DURING YOUR MEETING:

- Be prompt. Be professional. Arrive early.
- Introduce yourself (and others). Avoid bringing more than three people.
- Thank him/her for meeting with you and for votes he/she has made that you liked.
- Make different points. Try not to be repetitive.
- Provide personal and local examples of the Bill's impact.
- If asked for information you don't have, say you will get it ASAP, and do it!
- Personalize your relationship if possible: The closer your legislator feels to you, the more powerful your argument.
- Discuss, but don't argue.
- If he or she hasn't taken a position yet, they likely won't do so in a meeting. So patience and persistence are important.
- Ask when you should follow up to learn their decision or provide more information.

TIPS & TRICKS

- Be sure to do your homework. Learn about the issue you are bringing up and the Legislator you are speaking with.
- Contact your Legislators. You can do this by email, phone calls, direct visits, writing letters, or meeting with their staff.
- Let them see you as an informed and engaged member of the community. Come prepared with relevant materials. Be the expert.
- Send a thank you letter after your meeting. This is your chance to reiterate key points from your argument, as well as supplementing it with additional information. Keep your thank you letter brief and include your contact information.

OTHER WAYS TO LOBBY

Not everyone can make it to the State Capitol and meet with their Legislator, but that does not mean you are unable to participate. There are multiple ways for you to reach elected officials:

- Phone calls - Find your Representative's contact info on the MS State Legislature website or call the Capitol Switchboard at (601) 359-3770. Ask your neighbors to make calls, too! Leave a message if you can't make direct contact.
- Email and handwritten letters.
- Publish letters to the editors and opinion-editorials in your local newspaper.
- Meet with your Legislators in their districts outside of session.
- Start a petition.
- Attend or coordinate town halls or other public forums.
- Let us know how your meeting went.