



THE LOCKARD GROUP

Interacting with your Legislator ~ Tips to the Constituent

Legislators are faced with many topics that they must make informed and the best decisions that are best for those they represent. But it is not always easy for a legislator to know what issues are most important to you. Therefore, it is the job of constituent advocates to give state representatives accurate and useful information to help them make informed decisions. However, at times it can be difficult to know the most effective way to engage a legislator.

Legislative outreach requires more than just a few visits to law makers in Carson City or Washington, D.C. Legislative outreach requires development of relationships with legislators, legislative staff, policy makers and departments of government.

The following material was compiled from several sources and proven best practices to help you easily navigate what can sometimes be a daunting challenge when trying to navigate the legislative process.

THE BASICS

- Constituents have a responsibility to promote the interests of their cause and educate their legislator on the issue.
- The competition for the attention and time of elected officials is great.
 - Every year thousands of passionate advocates compete for state and national legislator's attention.
 - Some well-known and more established groups can afford to employ a large internal staff and pay several powerful lobbyists. But smaller, independent organizations don't often have this ability, at most only having one lobbyist.
 - Therefore, it is the job of advocates to help ensure that their needs and interests are adequately addressed by state and national legislators.



A FEW RULES TO ADVOCATE FOR YOUR CAUSE

- Unified voice is key. Advocates representing a group must present a clear, well-informed and unified message to a legislator. All members of the group should be giving legislators the same information.
- You are a source of information for your legislator. Legislators have little time and few staff. Interest on any one issue is limited. Your role is to fill the information gap.
- Maintain credibility. There is no faster way to lose your credibility than to give false or misleading information to a legislator.
- Know your supporters. Your legislator will want to know what group, individuals, state agencies and/or legislators are working with your organization's issues.
- Know your opposition. Be prepared by understanding the opposition's viewpoint. Anticipate their arguments and provide the legislator with rebuttals and answers to those arguments.
- Remember you are developing a relationship. Make the legislator aware of any personal connections you may have, no matter how insignificant. Let them know. It can make a difference.
- Don't be afraid to admit you don't know. If the legislator asks you for information you don't have, or asks something you don't know, tell them and offer to obtain the information for them.
- Be specific when asking for something. When you want a vote, information and/or answers to a question, make sure you ask directly and get an answer.
- Come in with suggestions. Approach a meeting with more than just a yes or a no to a bill. Come in with suggestions for the legislator on how to better a bill by providing written suggested language for them.
- Follow-up. First write a quick thank you note for meeting with you. Later, follow up by inquiring if the legislator did what he/she said they would. It is important that you thank them if they did, or ask them for an explanation if they didn't vote as they said they would.
- Don't burn bridges. Remain calm. It is easy to get emotional over issues you feel strongly about. However always remember to leave your meeting on good enough terms that you can go back to them. Remember, your strongest opposition today could be your strongest ally on the next issue.
- Know the Budget Process. Timing is everything. The Nevada budget runs on a fiscal year cycle that begins July 1 and ends June 30 of the following year. The issues of budget often supersede any other legislative concerns.

- Remember you are the boss. Your tax money pays the legislators' salaries, their staff, and all the operations for their office. You should be courteous, but don't be intimidated. Most legislators will be thankful for your input.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY

Legislative activity is any action calculated to influence the distribution of scarce resources or influence the status of impending bills before the legislature. It may include attempts to influence public opinion and stimulate legislative action by supporting or opposing specific legislative issues.

ACTIVITIES INCLUDE:

- Meeting with legislators
- Preparing and presenting testimony before legislative committees
- Initiating phone, email, fax blitzes to urge an action on specific legislation.
- Circulate petitions, contacting legislators, or participating in other efforts to impact legislative issues.
- Use Social Media to communicate (see Twitter page)
- Share your opinion on legislative issues: <https://www.leg.state.nv.us/App/Opinions/79th2017/A/>

ELECTED OFFICIAL CONTACTS

To schedule a meeting with your legislator please call their office and ask to speak to their scheduler. Let them know that you are a constituent and provide them with your home address. Indicate whether you would like to meet with your legislator when they are in the district or when they are in Carson City. If you would like to meet with the legislator in the district, ask if they have regularly-scheduled constituent hours that you can attend. Or, work with the scheduler to determine a location that is convenient for both of you in the district, such as a local coffee shop or restaurant.

Your district and legislative members can be found by accessing the link below. Once you have found your address, you can click on the representative name to access their contact information. <http://mapserve1.leg.state.nv.us/whoRU/>

For written communication, make your correspondence as personal as possible. A well-thought-out letter has more impact than a form letter or form email.

If time is critical, the best way to contact the legislator is with a phone call, e-mail or fax to the legislator's office.

If you make a phone call you will most likely speak with a legislative aide or staffer. Their job is to take and tally messages from constituents.

- Always identify yourself.
- Be concise, specific, and support your views with facts when possible.
- Be polite and respectful.
- Stay on message and keep to your main points.
- Always be sure to thank them for their time.
- When in the legislative building, it is very important to “stop by” and introduce yourself to your legislator’s attaché and staff. This is a very important first step in establishing a relationship that will serve you well during your entire lobbying activities.

LEGISLATOR VISITS

Face-to-face meetings with elected officials can be a very effective and valuable opportunity to voice your concerns and share your views about legislative issues, your community and your profession.

TOOLS FOR SUCCESS:

- Always make an appointment in advance—don’t just show up.
- When calling to schedule an appointment, identify yourself as a constituent and clearly state the purpose of the meeting. The following script may help as you make the call:

“Hi! I’m _____ from (state your home town). I would like to schedule an appointment to meet with Senator/Assemblyperson (Last Name) to discuss _____.” Indicate whether you would like to meet with your legislator in Carson City or in their home district.
- Research your legislator.
 - Know his/her history, especially any positions they may have taken on the issue you wish to discuss with him/her.
 - Research the legislators voting record, position statements, ratings from special interest groups and other pertinent information. (A brief biography for each legislator can be found on the Nevada Legislature’s website: <http://www.leg.state.nv.us>)
- Prepare a concise statement for your meeting.
 - You will have no more than 15-20 minutes to speak with your legislator.
 - Write down key points you plan to highlight.
 - Discuss how the issue impacts the groups involved.
 - Be familiar with the opposing arguments and be prepared to defend your views.
 - Use local data and anecdotes about the issue. Be specific and precise with the information you present.

- Conclude by providing your elected official with your business card or contact information and your willingness to assist.
- Don't use confusing jargon related to the issue and be sure to define terms.
- Bring written material with you.
 - Leave your elected official with resources that provide quick reference or support to the points you've discussed. A brief fact sheet, position papers or other resources.
- Be on time and be flexible with your time.
 - Don't be late. This may cause you to miss your meeting entirely. If you are delayed, call ahead. Interruptions can occur. Be flexible and understanding of the interruptions.
- Be prepared to meet with staff persons if your legislator is unable to make your appointment.
 - It is not uncommon for scheduling conflicts to happen at the last minute. It occurs less often in their home districts, but it does happen
- Be professional and diplomatic.
 - Present your information in a straightforward, friendly and professional manner. Do not argue. Show the legislator respect and try to find common ground from the start
- Listen carefully.
- State the issue in simple terms.
- Volunteer to serve as a contact on this issue.
 - Legislators will often call on individuals they see as knowledgeable on a specific issue or policy topic. Make them aware of your expertise and provide contact information so they can call on you in the future. Leave business cards or contact information with the legislator or his or her staffer.
- Say "thank you".
 - Be sure to send a thank you note promptly after your meeting. This provides you with another opportunity to restate your views, send any additional follow-up information or request action on the issue.
- Never offer an elected official anything in return for their support. Never discuss campaign finances, PAC contributions or endorsements. If you are interested in having a political discussion with your legislator, let them know that you would like to schedule a separate meeting to discuss how you can help them with their re-election efforts. NEVER discuss legislative issues and political contributions during the same meeting. Furthermore, NEVER have a political discussion in a legislator's state office.

Finally, encourage others in your group or those who support the issue to write to their own legislators. Provide some guidance around the issue and what you said/what they could say to their own representative. Don't give up once a vote has been taken. Remember this is a legislative relationship. Continue to communicate after a vote has been taken so you can maintain the relationship in the future. Remember to thank your legislator for any support and/or assistance he/she may give you as you continue to build your relationship.



USE TWITTER TO LET YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS KNOW HOW YOU FEEL

Here are a few of their "handles"

Federal

@SenCortezMasto
@SenDeanHeller
@repdinatitus
@RubenKihuen
@RosenforNevada
@RepMarkAmodei

State

@GovSandoval
@Hutch4Nevada
@SOSCegavske
@Dan4Nevada
@AdamLaxalt

Legislators

Senate

@AaronDFordNV
@Katkinson702
@tssegerblom
@DavidParksNV
@Senatorspearman
@MoDeniseNV
@JoyceWoodhouse
@RobersonForNV
@electjoehardy
@rattijulia
@Nicole4Nevada
@HeidiGansert

@YvannaCancela
@beckyharrisnv
@SenFarleyNV
@MManendo
@hammond4nevada
@DonGustavson
@BenKieckhefer

Assembly

@JasonFrierson
@Thompson4AD17
@Assemblywoman27
@maggie_carlton
@BustamanteAdams
@AssemblyNeal7D
@mikesprinkle30
@Joiner4Nevada
@ElliotAndersonv
@EllenBSpiegal
@HeidiAnnSwank
@EdgarFloresNV
@NelsonAraujoNV
@richcarrillo18
@oliviadiaz
@anderson4nv
@SteveYeagerNV
@AssmSkipDaly
@sbilbray
@WillMcCurdyII

@Miller4AD5
@watkins4nevada
@Ozzie4Nevada
@LVchrisbrooks
@Daniele4NV
@Sandra4V
@jilltolles
@TheLisaKrasner
@Wheeler4Nevada
@JohnHambrick
@Irahansen
@McArthur4Nevad
@EdwardsAD19
@votejimmarchant
@James_Oscarson
@Pickard4Nevada
@drrobintitus

Press

@News4Nevada
@TheNVIndy
@rgi
@reviewjournal
@meganmesserly
@SethARichardson
@SandrChereb
@SteveSebelius
@RalstonReports

THE NEVADA STATE LEGISLATURE WEBSITE

Leg.state.nv.us

The Nevada State Legislative website contains a wealth of information and can help you find information on legislators, bills, budgets, hearings and much more. The following url's are provided for help in navigating the website.

CALENDAR OF MEETINGS – You can find a list of hearings and view meetings from your computer: <https://www.leg.state.nv.us/App/Calendar/A/>

WHO IS MY LEGISLATOR? <http://mapserve1.leg.state.nv.us/whoRU/>

LEGISLATOR INFORMATION:

<https://www.leg.state.nv.us/App/Legislator/A/Senate/79th2017>

<https://www.leg.state.nv.us/App/Legislator/A/Assembly/79th2017>

BILL INFORMATION:

<https://www.leg.state.nv.us/Session/79th2017/Reports/>

COMMITTEE INFORMATION:

<https://www.leg.state.nv.us/App/NELIS/REL/79th2017/Committees/List>

SHARE YOUR OPINION ON LEGISLATIVE BILLS:

<https://www.leg.state.nv.us/App/Opinions/79th2017/A/>

EVENTS CALENDAR: <https://www.leg.state.nv.us/socialCalendar/>

SEARCH: <https://www.leg.state.nv.us/Site/Search/search.cfm>

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

<https://www.leg.state.nv.us/Division/Research/Library/FAQ/FAQ.cfm>



SAMPLE DOCUMENTS

The following are sample letters and documents to help guide you in contacting your legislator. The first document, titled “Legislative outreach visit report,” is designed so that we can have communication among all group members and be aware of legislative contacts that have been established. After each contact with a legislator, please fill out this document and email it to Marlene Lockard, at marlene@thelockardgroup.net. This way she will be able to build off the established contacts and have more effective legislative interactions.

Personal anecdotal stories are also useful, both for petitioning legislators and in writing testimonies. If you have or are aware of a powerful personal story that applies to the issue, please inform us of the story. The last document, titled “We need your story” gives a layout for this document.

Thank you for your interest and support in engaging with our organization’s membership. We hope you find these documents to be useful in guiding you to help advocate for our cause.

**LEGISLATIVE OUTREACH VISIT REPORT
STATE LEGISLATOR**

(Please fill out one form for each visit)

Email to: marlene@thelockardgroup.net

Your Name:	Your Group:
Name of Legislator Visited:	Or Staffer Name & Title
Date of visit:	Did you meet in the district or the Carson City office?
Does the Legislator have personal experience with the issue?	
If yes, please describe briefly:	
What did you discuss during your visit with the legislator?	
Was the legislator receptive to your message? Please describe:	
Should someone, such as the lobbyist, follow up with the legislator you visited? If yes, what should be addressed?	



TEMPLATE for MEETING REQUEST LETTER

Date

The Honorable First Name Last Name
State Senate/State Assembly
Address

Dear Senator/Assemblyman/Assemblywoman/Appropriate Title Last Name:

On behalf of the of **INSERT YOUR ORGANIZATION**, I am writing to respectfully request a meeting with you to discuss a few issues of priority to me and other constituents from **INSERT ORGANIZATION**. We are hoping that you might have time to see us.

Below are the details of this request.

Date: **INSERT DATE OR DATE RANGE**

Time: **INSERT TIME RANGE**

Contact to Confirm Meeting: **INSERT CONTACT (Facilitator/Coordinator)**

Attendees: **NAMES OF ATTENDEES**

Topics/Issues: **INSERT ISSUE(S)**

I very much hope that your schedule will permit us an opportunity to meet so we can discuss ways that we can work together. I will follow-up with your scheduler shortly to schedule a meeting. Should you or your staff have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at **PHONE NUMBER or EMAIL ADDRESS**. I look forward to seeing you soon.

Sincerely,

Full Name
Title
Home Address
Phone, E-mail

TEMPLATE for LETTER or EMAIL TO LEGISLATOR

Date

Subject: I am a constituent (issue)

The Honorable First Name Last Name

State Senate/State Assembly

Address

Dear Senator/Assemblyman/Assemblywoman/Appropriate Title Last Name:

I am a constituent of yours and live on _____ **give your street address—Legislators love to hear from their own constituents.**

I am asking you for your support of (state issue, if bill use bill number). This issue/bill requires _____.

[Insert a paragraph about your own situation. Tell the legislator briefly about your issue how it affects daily life. Give as much information or as little information as you wish, however making it personal will be more effective.]

I hope I can count on you for your support.

Sincerely,

Full Name

Title

Home Address

Phone, E-mail

TEMPLATE for THANK YOU LETTER AFTER VISIT

Date

The Honorable First Name Last Name
State Senate/State Assembly
Address

Dear Senator/Assemblyman/Assemblywoman/Appropriate Title Last Name:

I am writing to express my gratitude to **you/your staffer, First Name Last Name of Staffer**, for taking time out of **your/his/her** busy schedule to meet with me on **Month, Day, Year** to discuss with **you/First Name Staffer** the various issues of priority to me and the **organization**. I wanted to take this opportunity to reiterate my request that you:

1. **List the item(s) you discussed and the specific action you wish the elected official to take.**
2. **Support legislation that grants [insert additional action item].**
[Provide additional rationale/background for your requests. This is an opportunity to reiterate key points, or to mention items that you may have omitted during the in-person discussion.]

Thank you again for taking the time to meet with me. I am most appreciative to **you/First Name Staffer** for your consideration of my concerns. Please do not hesitate to contact me, should you have any questions about these or other **[issue]**-related matters. I would be happy to be a local resource for you. I look forward to hearing back from you regarding the status of our requests.

Sincerely,

Full Name
Title
Home Address
Phone, E-mail

SAMPLE DISSAPOINTMENT LETTER TO YOUR LEGISLATOR

Date

The Honorable First Name Last Name
State Senate/State Assembly
Address

Dear Senator/Assemblyman/Assemblywoman/Appropriate Title Last Name:

As a constituent and advocate of **INSERT ORGANIZATION**, I am writing to express my disappointment that you did not support **[Issue or Bill]**. I understand and appreciate that there are many reasons why legislators choose to not support some measures. As such, I respectfully request and would very much appreciate hearing from you as to why you did not support for this very important issue.

I appreciate your attention to my concerns and I thank you in advance for responding to this correspondence. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions about these or other _____ issues.

Sincerely,

Full Name
Title
Home Address
Phone, E-mail

WE NEED YOUR STORY!

Please complete and email to marlene@thelockardgroup.net.

Name of Advocate/Self-Advocate _____

(Circle one below)

Level 1: Full disclosure including willingness to use your photo in newspaper

Level 2: Willing to have first name with last initial in newspaper

Level 3: Fully Anonymous

Hometown _____

Your Story: What is your situation? Your story can focus on successes, challenges or both. (Your story can be as short as a paragraph and as long as several pages – whatever it takes to get a sense of what your needs are and what it will take to meet them.)

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