



Guide to Lobbying

Petitioning the Government or elected officials is embedded within the [First Amendment](#) of the United States Constitution. Today the act of lawfully seeking to influence a particular issue is known as lobbying. What distinguishes lobbying from advocacy is that you are making an ask (e.g. please vote for this bill) rather than simply educating people on an issue.

Lobbying, despite its negative public reputation, is designed so that any American can make their voice heard. As birds across the Americas face unprecedented threats, voices around the country must speak up and urge Congress to take action.

This guide helps demystify the process and share insight on how to effectively lobby for bird conservation.

PREPARE

Before you even get to the lobbying step, you need to prepare. Find out who your Senators and Representatives are on [Congress.gov](#). Conduct research into their background and interests. This information will help tailor your outreach and engagement efforts to them.

Be sure to know the answers to these questions about your elected official:

- What is their State or Congressional District?
- What issues face their state/district?
- What committees are they a part of?
- What are their key priorities?

Educate yourself on the topic you will be lobbying on. You want to ensure that you have a succinct elevator pitch ready before interacting with your elected official's office.

Create or print out any resources that might be useful to share with your elected official.



Tip: ABC Action Fund offers a range of resources that can help you on this learning journey. Some of these resources, like [policy updates](#), are also great to send or share when lobbying.

TIMING

Once prepared, you need to determine the right moment to take action. Think about where the bill is in the [legislative process](#). Does the bill still need to be introduced? Who are the sponsors?

If the bill was introduced, it's probably a good time to thank sponsors. If the bill is coming to a vote, time to encourage members of Congress to support it.

Regardless of where a bill is at, **proactive outreach is key!**



Tip: Be sure to follow the ABC Action Fund on [social media](#) or join our [email list](#)! We send out regular communications which can help you determine if there is momentum around a bill or not.

ACTION

You have prepared and considered your timing, now you are ready to take action.

First, ask yourself what type of action you need to take. Do you want to meet your elected official in person? If that's not feasible, do you want to call or send a message? Whatever you choose, here are some suggestions for how to go about it:

Schedule a meeting

Visit your elected official's website to request a meeting or directly contact their scheduler. Be sure to suggest times, as your elected official is busy and it takes more time for them to decide a date than it does you.

Call

You can find your elected official's phone number on their website, through the House and Senate [directories](#), or by dialing the U.S. Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121. When you call, have talking points ready. Make sure to quickly describe your issue and incorporate an ask.

Send an email

You can email your elected officials through a contact form on their website. Like calling, make sure your email is clear and to the point.

Write

You can find your elected official's address on their website. Ensure your letter includes a summary of the issue and an ask.



Tip: ABC Action Fund has a page with active [action alerts](#), which allow you to personalize a message and send it to your elected official. This saves you time and helps you quickly contact your elected official.

FOLLOW-UP

The follow-up to any lobbying activity is crucial for maintaining interest and engagement on your issue.

Keep any business cards or notes you had from your call or meeting. If you communicated through email, retain those messages.

Send a follow-up note, thanking the elected official or staff member for meeting or talking to you. This keeps you and your issue fresh in their mind. If they requested additional information on your issue (e.g. factsheets) be sure to send that too.

Prepare for the next action.

Finally, remember to stay personable and confident when engaging in this work. Find a connection with the person you are interacting with, while also remaining brief and to-the-point about what you want. For example, if you are talking to a Republican, focus on the fiscal benefits of the legislation. If you are emailing a Democrat, emphasize the social benefits of bird conservation. This goes a long way in having a productive exchange, which ultimately benefits birds.



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