

# LOBBYING BEGINS AT HOME

## MEETING WITH LEGISLATORS IN YOUR DISTRICT

You don't have to come to Sacramento to lobby your legislators. In fact, there are benefits to lobbying your legislators in your own district: legislators and staff may be more accessible, and it's a great way to establish a relationship with your legislator's office. Here are some steps that will help insure a productive meeting.

### Focus the meeting

- Pick an issue or piece of legislation that concerns you and gather like-minded people in a group for the meeting. You may want to gather people from your church, organization or Meeting or a group of diverse people with similar views. About five people is a good number.

### Request the meeting

- Fax a written request for a meeting to the legislator's home office and follow up with a phone call. You can find that information by entering your zip code at [leginfo.ca.gov](http://leginfo.ca.gov) under "Your Legislature." Use your organization's letterhead if appropriate. Let the staff know what you would like to discuss.

### Prepare for the meeting

- You may want to check with FCLCA staff for information on your legislator and the issue you will be addressing, and specific actions you can ask your legislator to take.
- Review the legislator's website to see his or her biography and press releases and to get a sense of his or her values and priorities. Consider this information when formulating your remarks.
- Set up a face to face meeting with the members of your delegation and determine who will cover which points and who will "chair" the meeting to keep it on topic.
- Summarize the key elements you want the legislator to know with a one-page memo.
- Bring a few pages of relevant materials to leave at the office.

### At the meeting

- You may meet with the legislator, but often you will meet with a staffperson. It is very useful to get to know the staff, as they will provide information on critical issues to the legislator.
- Be prepared for a meeting of around 15-30 minutes. When you come to the meeting, all the attendees should introduce themselves and state what group, if any, they represent. State what topic you wish to discuss. Ask for your legislator's view on an issue. Be patient and remain polite even if you don't get the response you want.
- Present your case and be prepared to answer questions. Make a specific request for support of a bill or legislative action. Give several brief points about why the legislator should support or oppose this issue – stay concrete. However, if you are speaking from a religious or spiritual basis, it is fine to discuss the underlying values that motivate you. Legislators need to hear from people of faith.

### Follow up

- If asked for information you can't provide, offer to follow up with a staff person.
- If a staff person doesn't know much about the issue or the legislator's position, ask for a follow up letter from them. Leave your carefully selected material with the staff person.
- Send a thank you note soon after the meeting, reiterating your request to the legislator and adding any key information you may have overlooked. This will help build a relationship over time, and relationships can have an enormous impact on the political process.

### Do it again

- Involve other people. Be sure to schedule visits on issues of importance on a regular basis. Soon the legislative staff may be calling you to ask your opinion! And let FCLCA know about your visits. Remember, legislators are elected by you to serve you – hearing from you is part of their job and makes them more effective in Sacramento. [FCLCA](#)