

## Face-To-Face Lobbying

Face-to-Face meetings with your elected officials are the most effective form of advocacy. You will get the most out of your visit, if you see lobbying as relationship building. You want to respect your legislator's public service and expertise, as you state your case and ask for support. You may not get a commitment at your visit, but if respectful, informed, and confident, you will be welcomed back. Over time your legislator, especially if hearing from others, will be more inclined to offer support to your cause. The guidelines below will help you lobby effectively.

### **Before Requesting a Meeting:**

- Identify who your legislators are: <http://geo.commissions.leg.state.mn.us/districts/start.html>
- Obtain relevant background information on legislator(s). Identify committee assignments and relevant votes on this issue.
- Do some background research on the issue you want to discuss. If you can, get data relevant to the district. (For example: rates of uninsured, bankruptcies due to medical expenses, organizational endorsers of the Minnesota Health Plan in the district). Use the same link as above, click on the "member info" link under the legislator's name.
- Rehearse a brief description of your issue and your request, in this case, support for the Minnesota Health Plan.
- Prepare or gather written materials you can leave with the legislator or a staff person.
- Consider whether you wish to lobby alone or with a group of constituents. You may want other constituents to accompany you for greater impact.
- Remember that you are a constituent and your legislator works for you! You do not need to be an expert to legitimately lobby your legislator.

### **Scheduling a Meeting:**

- Use the link above to find your legislator's office contact information.
- Call and request a meeting. Leave your name, contact information, a brief explanation of the reason for your visit and the number of constituents who will be attending.

### **During the Meeting:**

- Keep in mind that you are their constituent, and they are there to serve you. Do not be intimidated.
- Start the meeting with the one or two sentence description you rehearsed about why you are meeting with them.
- Try to relate at least one brief, personal, real life example.
- Be aware of the legislator's busy schedule and do not stay longer than 10 minutes unless she/he asks you to stay.
- If the legislator cannot meet with you for some reason, meet with staff and leave a personal note summarizing your message and request.
- Have your notebook or calendar handy in case the legislator asks for a follow-up meeting or for additional information.

### **After the Meeting:**

- Send a follow-up letter thanking the legislator and/or staff for time spent on your issue. Include a brief summary of action to be taken (typically, support for the MN Health Plan).
- Keep your legislators informed of the progress or problems concerning the issue.