

Nuts & bolts of lobbying

Virginia Diabetes Council

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What to do when lobbying

- Keys to success in advocacy
- Engage the grassroots lobbying effort
- Advocating in person
- Know your policymaker
- Fine tune the advocacy system
- Be the best advocate

Keys to success

- Listen
- Develop and nurture relationships
- Observe non-verbal behavior
- Be flexible and willing to compromise.
 - Determine if incremental approaches are better than no approaches.
- Know who the key people are and work to bring them on your side
 - Longevity
 - Majority party
 - Committee membership
- Manage Murphy's law

Get to know your legislators

- Remember: you have a state senator AND a delegate
- Look up legislator on General Assembly web site (go to House and Senate and hyperlink to their home pages). Google them.
- Get a feel for their political positions.
 - What is important to them?
 - Are there connections with them?
 - School, place of worship, hobbies, community volunteer activities, etc.
 - Do you have mutual acquaintances?

In-person advocacy (always preferable to put name and face together with them)

- Make appointment early (meet in the district if at all possible, between sessions)
- Be prepared with your argument
- Make and keep appointment
- Give both sides of issue, but explain why your side is better
- Talk about good public policy
- Stick to the issue
- Be honest
- Be courteous (no threats and so forth)
- Listen to what the legislators say about your idea/proposal
- Thank them for time (send thank-you handwritten note or email)

Engaging the Grassroots lobbying Effort

- Influencing members to support (or oppose) a bill by constituents
- Methods
 - In person at the General Assembly or in the district
 - By email ([House of Delegates](#)) ([Senate](#))
 - By phone at either the district or the Capitol (in session only) ([House](#)) ([Senate](#))

What to do during the General Assembly session when you're working on an issue

- Follow your bill on <http://lis.virginia.gov/>. You can access a small number of bills notifications through a free service of [Lobbyist in a Box](#).
- Ask for updates through Lobbyist in a Box or via the [House](#) email system. For the Senate, there are no email notifications, but you can check the “meetings” tab on the home page of <http://lis.virginia.gov/>
- Check the website or your emails daily.
- Watch for emails from the VDC Advocacy Committee for calls to action.

What are the characteristics of an effective advocacy system?

- The same message is shared by all
- Strong commitment to getting out the word
- People show up where and when they are supposed to
- Messages are delivered on time to the right person(s) in the right way
- Coordination and accountability
- The system is “feared” and revered

What are the characteristics of an effective grassroots advocate?

- Gets to know him/her before she needs them
- Believes in and can speak and interpret the message
- Knows her delegate and senator
 - Gets a call back in 30 minutes or less
 - Interacts even if differs politically and ideologically
- Responds within 24 hours to each request for advocacy
- Reports back to the person making the request
- Works on campaigns (time, talent, and/or \$\$)

Top 11 things you can do to become a stellar advocate for diabetes prevention and treatment

- Keep abreast of national and state trends
- Join the applicable trade association for your non-profit
- Vote and contribute to campaigns (money &/or time)
- Client advocacy skills identical to political advocacy skills
- Don't sit idly by
- Don't burn bridges
- Educate on issues, not on bills
- Visit with your legislators in their districts and in Richmond
- Listen to your assn's lobbyist and follow her suggestions
- Be honest and maintain your humor
- Remember that ultimately you're seeking whatever is consistent with the mission of your non-profit and service to the Commonwealth