



CONSTITUENT ENGAGEMENT GUIDE

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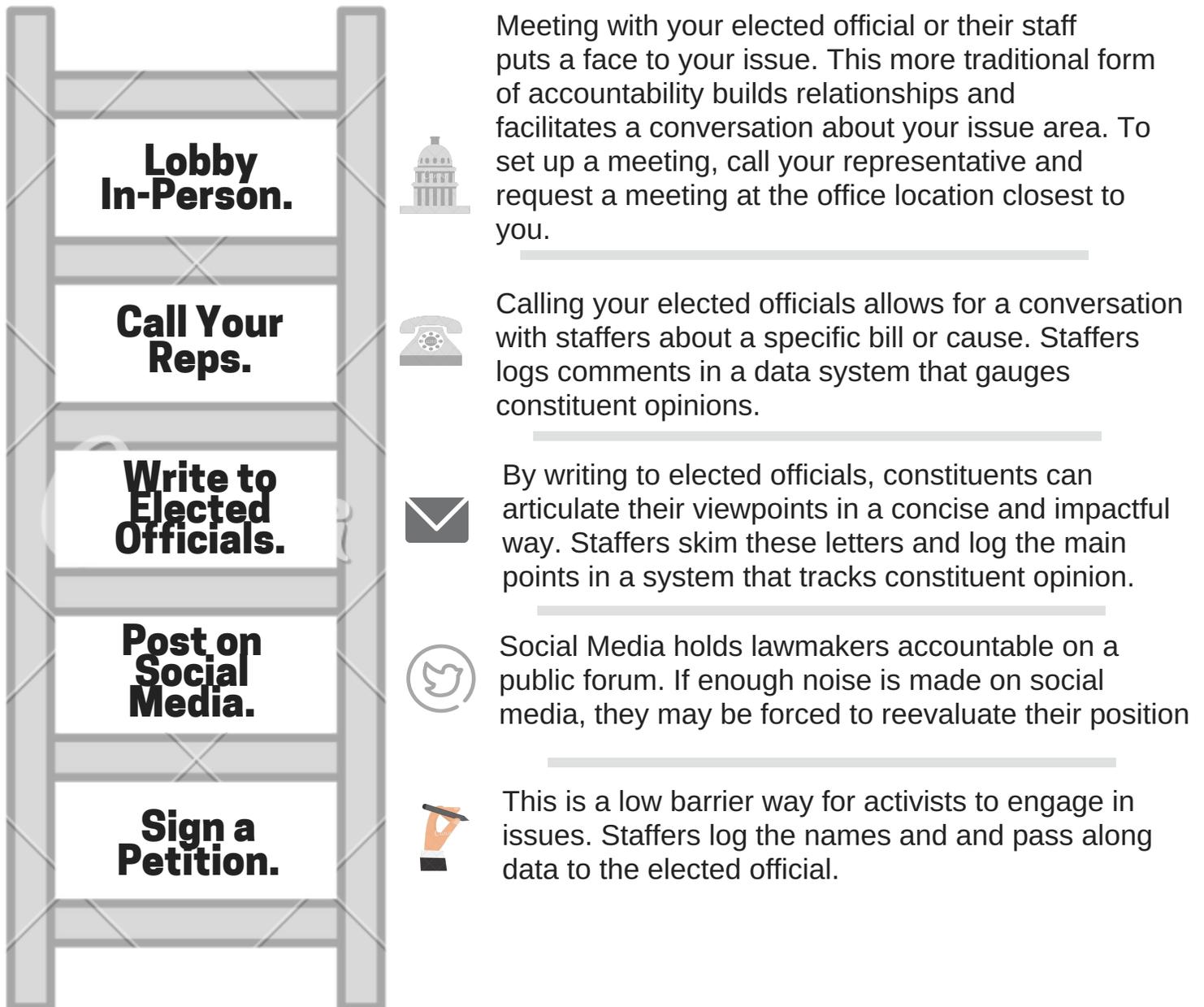
HOW TO LOBBY

What is Lobbying?

Lobbying is any act that seeks to hold a group, government official, or elected representative accountable. Speaking truth to power allows for individuals to become stakeholders in the lawmaking process. Whether on a local, state, or federal level, if your group wants to shape legislative change, lobbying is the most effective tool in your arsenal.

Ladder of Engagement

The ladder of engagement illustrates tiers of lobby advocacy and civic engagement. This visual gauges which method of lobbying is most effective for your group.



The ABC'S of Effective Lobbying

Accurate

All information given to staffers must be factually correct, this is important in terms of legitimacy and ethics. If you are not aware of a fact or the answer to a question, let the staffer know and follow up after the meeting.

Brief

Staffers typically have packed schedules. They are taking time out of their days to have a conversation with you, make sure that your talking points are brief and focused.

Courteous

Though you might not always agree with a staffer or elected official, it is important to remain professional; you might be able to lean on this connection to make progress on another initiative.

Other Tips to Keep in Mind

Keep Lobby Advocacy within your State or Represented Region

Engage as many activists as possible in your lobby initiatives, the more individuals that are involved in your lobby actions, the more impactful

Stay focused on One or Two Issues

Though it might seem impactful to reach out to Senators and Representatives from other districts or states, it is not within their purview to record opinions from individuals who are not their constituents.

Numbers Make a Difference

Stay focused on One or Two Issues. Staffers will most likely only take time to follow up or report the main points. In order to make an impact, focus and narrow your lobby effort on one to two issues.

Be Clear About What You Want: Make an Ask

During your interaction with staff or an elected official, clearly relay exactly what you want your elected official to do after the meeting. For example, this could be asking them to vote yes or no on a certain piece of legislation or co-sponsoring a bill.

How To Write An Op-Ed

What is an Op-Ed?

An Op-ed is a strong and informed opinion column about a specific topic or subject. An op-ed can have a targeted audience or can be written for the general public. Op-eds are usually written by organizations, activists, experts, opinion leaders, or private citizens. The goal of an op-ed is to present a clear and dynamic opinion on an issue that has the capability to inform and engage the reader.

Dos & Don'ts For Op-Eds

Do stay on message.

Before you begin to write, please identify why you are crafting this op-ed. What topic area are you focusing on, why does it matter to you, and who is your targeted audience? The answers to these questions will help inform your writing

Do know your intended outlet.

Every news outlet has a different voice, different demographics, and different guidelines around op-eds. Please familiarize yourself with the outlet's rules before you send them your material.

Do use your own voice and narratives.

Because many of our issues and campaigns are quite broad, it is easy to talk about everything at once. Focus your op-ed on one issue and make sure that you are covering it thoroughly.

Do grab their attention immediately.

An attention grabbing opening is the best way to get someone to continue to read. Place emphasis on the first three sentences of your op-ed to set the narrative and to grab the spotlight.

Do know and state the facts.

Your opinion is important, but having statistical evidence to support your opinions is critical in formulating a cohesive op-ed. Please make sure that within your column, you are citing relevant facts and stats that drive your point home.

Do bring in topical events and issues.

Many of NOW's issue areas and campaigns transcend time. However, it is important to incorporate relevant material. This increases the chances of your op-ed being chosen.

Do Keep it Concise.

An op-ed should be between 500 and 1000 words. Make sure that every word counts.

How To Write A Letter to the Editor (LTE)

What is a LTE?

A letter to the editor (LTE) is a response to an article or column posted in a magazine. An LTE can come from various sources, private citizens, activists, other journalists, or experts in the issues discussed in the original article. However, LTE's are often most effective when they are crafted by those who have a unique perspective or breadth of knowledge about the subject expressed in the original article. Though LTE's are often take the opposing side of the narrative presented in the original article, they can also be spaces to reaffirm an piece of writing that supports your viewpoint.

Dos & Don'ts of LTE

Do keep it brief.

An LTE (unless particularly special circumstances) should be no more that 2 to 3 paragraphs.

Do get to the point quickly.

Because LTE's rely on brevity, there is no room for introductions or fluff. Stick to the point.

Do cite the article and author you are responding to in your LTE.

Remember to address the author and the content head on, do not beat around the bush.

Remember your tone.

What is the general voice of the letter? Humorous? Sardonic? Serious? Whatever tone you choose, make sure it is consistent.

Do get specific.

Use your LTE to highlight specific concerns or issues.

Do use facts.

While an LTE is a personal response, it is always more potent when quantitative data is included.

Do be creative.

Use the space you have thoughtfully. Figure out the best way to make your argument while standing out from the dozens of other LTEs.