

# INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS



## Lobbying: Making or Breaking Policy

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# What is Lobbying

## Definition of LOBBY

lobbied; lobbying

intransitive verb

: to conduct activities aimed at influencing public officials and especially members of a legislative body on legislation

transitive verb

**1:** to promote (something, such as a project) or secure the passage of (legislation) by influencing public officials *lobby* a bill through Congress

**2:** to attempt to influence or sway (someone, such as a public official) toward a desired action *lobbying* senators for tax reform



# What is Lobbying?

## Why Lobby?

Virtually every aspect of a fire fighter's job – from equipment and staffing, to bargaining rights and pensions – is shaped by elected officials.

Lobbying is a proven effective way to help meet your goals, or defeat your rivals.



# Step One: Building Relationships

**The best way to achieve lobbying success is to develop productive, long-term relationships with elected officials.  
(and staff!)**

- Legislators want and need knowledgeable people they can trust on selected issues

Honest

Knows Real World Impact

Accurate

Helpful Ally



# Step One: Building Relationships

## Challenges

- Takes Time and Effort
  - Get to know your elected official and their issues
  - Be visible
- Accept That You Won't Always Agree
  - Easier said than done!



# Step One: Building Relationships

Don't Wait Until You Have an "Ask"

Station Visits

Ride Alongs

Grant Checks

FIREOPS 101



# Step Two: Gathering Information

**Clear Goal: What are you looking to Achieve?**

**Questions to ask Yourself and be prepared to support:**

- Why is this important?
- How can I demonstrate this problem / issue?

**Gathering Information**

- Data – from your local, the IAFF, City Council, NFPA, other reputable sources
- Anecdotes



# Step Three: Persuasion

- Face to Face Meeting
- Grassroots and Grasstops Activists
- Coalition Building
- Social Media
- Other Incentives



# The Face-to-Face Visit

## Before the Meeting

- Know the Issue and Status
- Know the Legislator's Position
- Be Able to Articulate Arguments in Favor and Against



# The Face-to-Face Visit

## During the Meeting

- Start with a Brief Description of the Issue
- Give Arguments in Favor
- Explain Impact with Personal Story
- Listen and Respond
- Try to Get a Firm Commitment (Don't Push too Hard!)
- Write Down any Questions or Concerns
- Reiterate Commitment or Next Steps
- Leave Behind Written Materials



# The Face-to-Face Visit

## After the Meeting

- Debrief: Did you deliver your message? What feedback did you receive?
- Send a Written Thank You
  - Email is acceptable
  - Include answers to questions or additional information
- Schedule a follow up meeting if necessary



# The Face-to-Face Visit



# Grassroots and Grasstops

## Advocates in Your Local to Help You

- Identify Potential Advocates
- Assess Relationship Strength
- Evaluate Willingness to Leverage Relationship
- Determine Level of Interest in Issue
- Determine Preferred Engagement Activities



# Coalition Building

## Advocates Outside of Your Local to Help You

- Other Impacted Organizations
- Concerned Citizens

### Why a Coalition?

- Goals are similar and compatible
- Working together will enhance both groups' abilities to reach their goals
- Benefits of coalescing will be greater than the costs

Can Be Temporary

Keep in Mind the Disadvantages of Coalitions



# Social Media

## Social Media to:

- Educate
- Empower
- Persuade

Download Timmins Presentation:

“Using Social Media to Achieve your Legislative Agenda”



# Other Incentives

Be Helpful to their Priorities

Be Helpful Politically

Attend Rallies

Gold and Black Branding

Attend Fundraisers

- Keep Ethics Rules and Regulations in Mind
- This Goes Without Saying, so I'm Going to Say it: Don't Break the Law.



# Tactics

- Be an Ally

Let me help you!

- Be a Persuader

I need you to help me!

- Be a Disrupter – USE EXCEEDINGLY SPARINGLY

Do this or else!



# Keep in Mind

## Keep Messaging Consistent

- Bad messaging = wrong outcome

## Know the Rules of the Road

- The Legislative Process is an Assembly Line
- Where Things Could get Tied Up or Fall Apart



# Good Lobbying

## Case Study: The Fire Fighter Cancer Registry Act

Goal: Establish a National Fire Fighter Cancer Registry

Method: Federal Legislation

How would you Lobby?



# Bad Lobbying

## Case Study 2: Ward Diesel

Goal: Sell More Diesel Exhaust Systems

Method: Obtain AFG Priority Status

How would you Lobby?



# Let's Lobby!

## Scenario: Presumptive PTSD Coverage

The State House is considering legislation to provide PTSD workers' compensation coverage for fire fighters, law enforcement, and paramedics



# Summary

## Keys to Effective Lobbying

- Build Relationships
- Gather Information
- Persuasion

Clear Goals

Flexible Methods



# Questions and Discussion

