

Tips for Lobbying your Colorado Legislator

Former Representative Dianne Primavera, a great friend to seniors, was Colorado Senior Lobby's guest coach at a Monday Morning Legislative Meeting in February 2017. Her wisdom only illustrates for us how much we miss her.

– Steve Grund

Tips for Lobbying your Colorado Legislator

(What Works and What Doesn't)

By Former Representative Dianne Primavera

1. Tell the truth, don't provide any "alternative facts". Remember, each legislator comes to serve with a limited background. There is no way they know all the issues or facts for each aspect of Colorado law. They are relying on you to educate them.
2. State clearly what problem you are trying to solve. If they can't understand the problem, they won't know if the proposed bill will help fix it or hurt it.
3. Tell your story when you testify – personal stories about how this bill will impact your life.
4. Understand both sides of the issue; what will the other side say? Is there a compromise?
5. Legislators receive lots of emails. If you are going to send one, keep it short and concise, focusing on the issue. If the email is long, and the legislator gets many of them, it loses its impact. They will just scroll to the bottom to see if the writer is one of their constituents. If you are not in their district, your message may get deleted. Worst thing is form letters – once you read the first one, you skip the rest of them, even if it may contain a little bit different info or personal story.
6. Make sure to lobby your legislator from your house and senate district. They want and need to hear from you. If you don't get a response, try a different way to contact them, i.e. no response from email, try snail mail, no response from snail mail, try a phone call, no response from a phone call, try a post card, if still no response, go to their town hall meeting or a location where you know they will be.
7. Tell your legislator how the issue will impact their district. They are there to be your representative, voice and to help everyone within their district.
8. Be prepared to educate your legislator on the issue. Remember they come from all different backgrounds; odds are that they are not familiar with senior issues and needs.
9. When the session first starts, it is easier to get in touch with your legislator, but once things get moving, in March and April, it is harder to be able to reach your legislator. They will be busy in committees, meeting with stakeholders, working on compromises and amendments to bills. The summer is the best time to talk with your legislator.
10. Food is good! Legislators are always hungry. Providing a lunch is a good thing. If you send any correspondence to your legislator, make it short, concise, succinct and to the point. Making it eye catching is a benefit.

11. When you testify in committee, keep it short and succinct. If someone has already said it, don't repeat it.

Each legislator is allowed to originate five bills only each session; but, is allowed to co-sponsor other bills originating from other legislators.

12. Remember, this is a citizen process; you have the right to be there and to make your voice heard. We all own the problems and the solutions.

Do you have your Legislative Directory?

Click <http://leg.colorado.gov/legislators> and find your representatives here.