

A GUIDE TO ORGANIZING A LOBBY DAY

WHAT IS A LOBBY DAY?

A lobby day is an organized day for constituents to speak directly with their legislators in favor of or in opposition to an issue or legislation. Lobby days can be used to educate, persuade, or even just gauge legislators' positions on a particular issue.

WHY HOLD A LOBBY DAY?

- To help your campaign understand what legislators' positions are on issues
- To help your campaign influence legislators regarding legislation
- To help your campaign to gain visibility
- To demonstrate the campaign's ability to coordinate and organize
- To show the strength of your campaign, which may bring new volunteers, supporters, partners and donors into your group
- To demonstrate that your campaign and those connected to it are educated and committed
- To engage volunteers in your campaign, which helps with volunteer retention
- To provide an opportunity to earn media attention

STEPS TO PLANNING:

1. Determine the role your lobby day will play in your campaign strategy.

- To educate legislators
- To determine legislators' position
- To advocate for/against legislation
- To find sponsor(s) for your legislation

2. Set goals, which could include:

- Number of people participating
- Number of legislators spoken to
- Number of committed votes
- Qualitative feedback from participants

3. Determine which legislators to target.

- Committee members
- Influential members
- Members on the fence
- Members who represent the people you were able to recruit
- Additional members as capacity allows



4. **Assign roles.** (One person may take on multiple roles.)

- Lead/Manager - makes sure all tasks are completed, checks in with all other roles to ensure the event is on track
- Volunteer coordinator - leads the effort to recruit participants, and manages the volunteer experience on the day of the event including check-in, training, and logistical coordination
- Location liaison - scouts and determines the meeting spot, provides printed materials to participants, coordinates any food/beverages
- District lead - coordinates constituents so that they are organized by their legislative district
- Communications coordinator - creates material for the event including an overview of the issue, talking points and leave behinds, they may also be responsible for press including developing materials such as releases and advisories along with coordinating any press conferences before or after the event, they could also be the primary spokesperson or could prepare other spokespeople
- Social media coordinator - coordinates social media posts and material, coordinates with any photographers or videographers
- Lobbying trainer - trains volunteers before the lobby day, ideally both at a separate training before the day itself and in a short huddle day-of before lobby meetings begin

5. **Determine date after researching legislative calendar and other events.**

- Identify dates and times that are more conducive to meeting legislators such as between floor sessions or an evening lobby night where they will likely be available. If you're not sure about timing, contact your legislator's office and speak to their staff about your event to get advice.
- Schedule the constituent meetings with legislative staff **ahead of time** and confirm appointments week-of.

6. **Prepare printed materials.**

- One-pager on the issue/legislation to leave with the legislator
- Talking points for participants
 - » If legislation is the focus, have the number and title of legislation as well as sponsors, key provisions, and status.

7. **Recruit volunteers who are constituents in targeted districts and pre-assign participants.**

- Constituents should lobby their own legislators.
- Assign district leaders to coordinate participants.

8. **Train participants.**

- Hold virtual or in person lobby training 1-2 weeks prior to the event:
 - » Provide the reason for the lobby day and expectations for the event.
 - » Provide education on the issue and/or legislation.
 - » Include a role play with a script.

- ◇ Script should include a personal story connected to the issue
- ◇ Script should include key talking points including addressing any opposition
- ◇ Script should include a clear ask of the legislator
- ◇ Script and roleplay should include roles of participants in meetings (Notetaker, meeting leader, person who tell a personal story)
- » Share hints like staying positive and not answering questions if you don't know the answers.
- » Prepare a note-taker for each meeting to record how the meeting went, legislators' answers to the ask or their stance on issue, contacts for key staffers and any questions they asked.
- Schedule a training at the beginning of the lobby day before volunteers meet with legislators to offer a refresher for the people who attended the earlier training and quick tips for those who missed it.

9. Develop a schedule for the Lobby Day and share it with participants at the training.

10. Confirm all details 2-3 days prior to lobby day, including meeting times with legislators and confirm calls to all volunteers.

SAMPLE RUN OF SHOW:

9:30-9:45: Greet volunteers at a clearly indicated meeting spot.

- Volunteers sign in and get their Lobby Day package (talking points, issue overview, and a leave behind for legislators) food and beverage.

9:45-10:15: Give a welcome speech to volunteers.

- Remind volunteers of purpose and get them excited to be there; Thank volunteers.

10:15-11:15: Train volunteers with quick training tips and reminders.

- Share information on taking and sharing pictures/video;
- Go over agenda and talking points;
- Provide map, script, and other information;
- Role play.

11:15-12:15: Hold rally or press conference, if planned.

1:00-4:00: Meet with legislators and/or staff.

- Provide one pager and share personal story;
- Ask legislator for position on issue/legislation and take notes;
- Give time for questions/concerns on the issue/legislation and respond;
- Follow up.

4:00-4:30: Debrief with volunteers and collect notes.

POST EVENT:

- Provide press with a release and photos.
- Share pictures/videos/stories on social media platforms.
- Share results with participants and supporters.
- Fundraise from a successful event.
- Send thank you notes to legislators and participants, and follow up on any questions asked in lobby meetings.

TOP TIPS

- Observe and participate in a lobby day before planning your own.
- Prioritize recruitment and scheduling lobby meetings with key elected officials and constituents from target districts.
- Make sure you and your campaign are in [compliance with lobbying laws](#), especially considering your [501c3 and/or 501c4 status](#).
- Know the rules around entering the building and any security requirements, including ID requirements.
- Make sure that your lobby day takes place on a day that works within the legislative calendar or is prior to a key moment in the campaign, such as before a hearing or committee vote.
- Start planning about four months before the event.
- Have a volunteer call to schedule lobby days or do in-person visits to offices to schedule meetings about 4 weeks ahead of time.
- Hold smaller lobby days and grow.
- Learn and keep track of anyone with personal connections to legislators and use those connections.
- Make sure legislators who support your bill or issue know the plan and check for their participation.
- Plan lobby days with coalition partners and their volunteers.
- Meet with participants before lobby day begins and prepare.
- Provide transportation for participants, if needed.
- Hold a rally or press conference if it meets your strategy.
- Include high profile speakers.
- Include signs, stickers, buttons, t-shirts to help distinguish the volunteers and your campaign. Make sure to investigate the rules about signs.
- Include social media as part of your action.
- Plan each and every detail ahead of time.
- Share stories about how it went with media and social media.
- Thank legislators and their staff for meeting with you – it goes a long way!
- Celebrate your work!
- Recognize that it may take many conversations to get a legislator on your side.