



California College Democrats

Lobbying Guide

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Before the Meeting

Most of your work should occur before you arrive at your meeting. In particular, you should:

- **Do your homework.** Research who your legislators are, what they believe, and how they have voted in the past. This will help you learn their priorities, and therefore how you can best persuade them.
- **Prepare written materials.** Prepare a short memo explaining your position and what you want your legislators to do. This will help them remember you in the future. However, since legislators and their staff are busy, keep your briefs short (one or two pages maximum).
- **Confirm your meeting.** Call your legislators' offices in advance to confirm the dates, times, and topics of your meetings. This will help you avoid miscommunication and remind legislators of your agenda.



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Before the Meeting

- **Dress professionally.** Dressing well shows respect and helps establish your credibility. Therefore, it increases your chances of building productive, long-term relationships.
- **Meet at a staging location.** Instead of arriving at your legislators' offices individually and at different times, meet nearby and enter as a group.
- **Plan your meeting.** Assign members different roles and run through a practice meeting in advance. This helps you iron out any flaws in your presentation and appear more professional.



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At the Meeting

At your meeting, you should:

- **Introduce yourselves.** Introduce your chapter and highlight your past accomplishments. In particular, tell legislators if any of their constituents are in your group.
- **State the problem.** Let your legislators know what you are concerned with and why. In particular:
 - Use personal stories. Let your legislators know how the issue affects you personally. This makes much more of an impression than just facts and numbers.
 - Stick to one issue at a time. You won't have time to explain more than one issue well. If you try to explain everything, your legislators may not remember anything.
- **Make the ask.** Ask your legislators to take specific action on a specific policy item. Don't give them wiggle room, and force them to make a concrete commitment. (E.g. "Will you vote yes on AB 346?")



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At the Meeting

If they agree:

- **Turn them from a supporter into a champion.** For example, you can ask them to sponsor a bill or write a letter to the editor in your local newspaper.
- **Ask how you can be a resource.** Legislators know how to get bills passed, and they may know how you can help. For instance, they may ask you to speak at a committee hearing or start a letter writing campaign.

If they are undecided:

- **Ask about their concerns.** If you know their concerns, you can better address them.
- **Offer to follow up in the future.** After your meeting, you should research facts to support your arguments and answer their concerns. Ask to sustain a dialogue so you can send them this information in the future.



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At the Meeting

If they disagree:

- **Stay cordial.** Thank them for their time, and do not take differences personally. You may wish to work together in the future, so don't burn your bridges.
- **Always** thank legislators and their staff for meeting you. They are extremely busy, so thank them for their time.
- **Never** say something if you're not sure it is true, as doing so could damage your credibility. Don't be afraid to say, "I don't know."



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After the Meeting

- **Record what happened.** Mark down who you met with and what they said. People often forget the details of meetings, so you should have a record of what happened.
- **Send a thank you note.** Notes both remind legislators of your meeting and make you look more professional.
- **Follow up.** In the future, remind legislators of their commitments. For example, you may wish to call them before a relevant vote.

More generally, following up can help you build a lasting relationship, strengthening your club and building your power.



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Have any questions?

If you have any questions or would like more information about lobbying, feel free to contact CCD's Political Director at cacollegedems.org/contact.

