

HOW TO

Lobby Your State Legislators

TO JOIN THE FIGHT AGAINST FAKE CLINICS

What is lobbying?

Sometimes lobbying is made to sound like a dirty word—something only big corporations do to further their own narrow financial interests. It's true that big corporations do a lot of lobbying. But so do small grassroots non-profits and individual social justice advocates. Any constituent can—and *should!*—lobby his/her elected representatives. Just like voting, lobbying is an integral part of the democratic process.

Lobbying might sound intimidating, but you don't need special education, experience, or skills to do it. Lobbying is simply telling your elected representatives what is important to you and why, and then asking them to take specific action(s) to address the issue.

What am I lobbying for?

Here in New York City, Local Law 11 regulates fake clinics, requiring them to disclose that they are not licensed healthcare facilities and that there are no medical professionals on site. State Senator Brad Hoylman (D. 27th State Senate District) has introduced legislation in the State Senate that would basically put Local Law 11's requirements into effect statewide (S 8336).

State legislators need to hear from their constituents what is important to them. There are so many important issues to be addressed in the city and the state, legislators rely on their constituents to help them set priorities. It is up to each and every one of us to lobby our State Senators and Assembly Members, urging them to help pass this bill. Many might be supportive in theory, but might fail to take action if they are not hearing from constituents.

Tips for a Successful Lobby Visit*

DOS & DON'TS

DO: MAKE AN APPOINTMENT

- When the legislature is not in session, you can make your appointment in the District Office near your home. When in session, you should consider traveling to Albany to meet there.
- You may request a meeting with any legislator, but you are much more likely to get an appointment if you are a constituent of that legislator.
- You may attend your lobby visit alone, or in a small group.

DO: BE ON TIME

Arrive early to allow time to go through security and find the room.

DO: BE PREPARED

- Practice what you want to say in advance. Stay on point and stick to your message.
- If you are in a group, assign roles in advance. Decide who will say what.

DO: BE HONEST, ALWAYS

Never mislead or misstate the facts. For example, do not claim to be a constituent if you are not.

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DOS & DON'TS

DO: MAKE IT PERSONAL

If you have one, share a short personal story to make your case more compelling.

DO: LEAVE BEHIND INFORMATION

Leave a packet of information about the issue and the legislation.

DO: MEET WITH STAFFERS

Staff members, especially Legislative Coordinators, are very important to elected officials. They often play a large role in educating the legislator and helping to set priorities.

DO: SAY THANK YOU

- At the start of the meeting, thank them for taking the time to meet.
- At the end of the meeting, thank them again.
- Follow up your meeting with a brief thank-you email or letter, briefly re-stating your "asks."

DO: REPORT BACK TO US

Please let us know how it went and how the legislator or staffer responded.

Contact us at protruthny@ncjwny.org.

DON'T: MAKE STUFF UP

If you don't know the answer, simply admit you don't know and offer to get back to them. Contact us at protruthny@ncjwny.org and we will help answer your questions so you can circle back.

DON'T: WASTE TIME INTRODUCING EVERYONE IN A LARGE GROUP

DON'T: ARGUE

Make your points politely and stay on message. As a last resort, you may need to simply agree to disagree.

DON'T: ALLOW THE LEGISLATOR OR STAFFER TO HIJACK YOUR TIME

If the legislator or staffer tries to shift the focus of the discussion, you can quickly steer the conversation back by saying, *"Thank you for telling us about this other important issue you are working on. It sounds very worthwhile. We are here today to discuss the deceptive practices of fake clinics..."*

DON'T: BE INTIMIDATED

As a constituent, you have every right to be there, to share your views, and to attempt to persuade your elected officials. You may very well know more than he/she does about this topic!

DON'T: BE DISAPPOINTED TO MEET WITH A STAFFER

As noted above, oftentimes staffers have a great deal of influence about the priorities of the legislator. Take the opportunity to make your case!

MEETING FORMAT

You will probably only have 20 minutes or so, so be sure to keep things moving.

ONE: OPENER

- Thank them for taking the time to meet.
- Introduce yourself and your group.

TWO: PRESENTATION OF THE ISSUE

- Explain the problem that must be addressed: The deceptive practices of fake clinics and how they hurt the state's most vulnerable women and girls.
- Consider including a brief personal story, if you have one that's truly on point.
- State the policy solution (proposed legislation S 8336) and why you support it.
- Ask your state legislator to (if a Senator) co-sponsor S 8336, or (if an Assembly Member) the corresponding Assembly bill, A 5911.

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MEETING FORMAT

THREE: WAIT FOR A RESPONSE

- Be sure to listen actively.

FOUR: ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS & ADDRESS ANY COUNTER-ARGUMENTS

- If you don't know the answer to a question, admit you don't know and be sure to circle back with the answer.
- Remain polite, even in the face of deep disagreement.

FIVE: WRAP-UP

- Review decisions, action steps, and any commitments for follow-up.
- Thank the legislator and/or staffer for his/her time.
- Collect business cards from staff to stay in touch.
- Leave your contact information and other informational materials about the issue.

NEED BACKUP?

We can help. Contact us at protruthny@ncjwny.org if you need help preparing for a lobby visit or would like a professional advocate to accompany you on your scheduled visit.

**Adapted in part from the www.NCJW.org website.*