

LOBBY YOUR STATE LEGISLATORS TO JOIN THE FIGHT AGAINST FAKE CLINICS

Overview: 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 their 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?

State Senator Brad Hoylman (D. 27th State Senate District) and Assembly Member Deborah Glick (D. Assembly District 66) has introduced legislation in the State Senate that would authorize the Commissioner of Health to study and report on the impact of limited service pregnancy centers. This is essential as it will hold limited service pregnancy centers accountable to disclose how their procedures and manipulation impacts pregnant people state wide. This is referred to as Bill S6311 in the Senate and Bill A8212 in the Assembly.

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 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*

DO’S and DON’T’S

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 travelling 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.

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 they do about this topic!

DON'T be disappointed to meet with a staffer.

- As noted above, often times 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.

1) Opener

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

2) 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 people.
- Consider including a brief personal story, if you have one that's truly on point.
- State the policy solution (proposed legislation S 6311) and why you support it.
- Ask your state legislator to (if a Senator) co-sponsor S 6311, or (if an Assembly Member) the corresponding Assembly bill, A 8212.

3) Wait for a response.

- Be sure to listen actively.

4) Answer any questions and 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.

5) Wrap-Up

- Review decisions, action steps, and any commitments for follow-up.
- Thank the legislator and/or staffer for their 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 prothruthny@ncjwny.org if you need help preparing for a lobby visit or would like a professional advocate to accompany you on your scheduled visit.

Not sure who your elected officials are?

You can look up who your senator is at www.nysenate.gov/find-my-senator and you can look up your assembly member at www.nyassembly.gov/mem/search/.

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