



LOBBYING TIPS



INTRODUCTION: Introduce your group to one of the staff people sitting in the reception area of the office. Let him or her know you (1) have an appointment, or (2) do not have an appointment, but would like to meet the member of Congress or the staff person who handles child nutrition issues.

NAME AND TITLE: Make sure you know the member's name and title. If you are meeting with a member of the House, call the legislator "Representative (last name)." If meeting with a member of the Senate, call the legislator "Senator (last name)."



TIME: Find out how much time the person you are meeting with can spend with you. Adjust your planned presentation accordingly.

LOCAL STORIES: Tell a story about how each issue you discuss will affect your district, school or business. Members may forget the details of the issue, but will remember your stories. They will rely on staff to get the details.



POLITICS: DO NOT be partisan or argumentative; DO explain and inform.

ANSWERS: Talk about what you know, and do not hesitate to say, "I don't know but I can get that information for you," or ask them to call SNA's Child Nutrition & Policy Center for the information.

TALK CHILD NUTRITION: Try to keep the conversation on track. If the member or staffer starts talking about other programs or issues, politely say, "I am not familiar with that, but let me tell you about another school nutrition issue important to your district..."



RELATIONSHIP: Establish a long-term relationship with the staff person handling child nutrition. Write down the staffer's name and phone number. Invite them to visit your school; offer to send more information. Check in with that person periodically, once a month or so: do not wait until a crisis to call.

ACCOUNTABILITY: Establish accountability. Tell the member or staffer that you would like to call to find out how the member voted on the issues you discussed.

STAY ON THE OFFENSE: Do not be defensive. You are the expert on child nutrition in your congressional district; it is your civic responsibility to educate your member on these issues. Your House and Senate "representatives" cannot represent you if they do not know your views!



ALWAYS SAY THANK YOU: Thank them for their time, regardless of whether or not they agreed with you. Leave the line of communication open. Sometimes it takes numerous follow-up conversations, even years, before you can "sway" them to your side, but you CAN do it!