

## *"Do's & Don'ts of lobbying your legislators"*

### *Your "How to" Guide for getting things done in Ohio's Capital!*

Every legislator is sensitive to grassroots action. Letters, emails and phone calls from constituents are the best source of information a legislator has in order to make decisions on important issues.

After all, the voters are the ones who put them in office.

Thoughtful, sincere letters and emails on issues that directly affect the writer get the most attention. Place a phone call if the issue is urgent.

This publication offers OSPE members some pointers to help you make sure your communications are persuasive.



## **Attention:** **Engineering Ambassadors!**

### *Are you ready to protect our profession's future--today?*

Ask OSPE how you can establish a long-lasting relationship with your legislators that will help protect professional engineering and help us do our job protecting the public!

We'll show you how to invite your legislators to a "Backyard B-B-Q."

We'll help you determine who your state representative and state senator are and how easy it is to ask them to meet with you and your OSPE chapter!

Call OSPE at 1-800-654-9481 (223-1144 in Columbus) to find out how to organize your own Backyard B-B-Q.

It's easy!



*A state society of the National Society of Professional Engineers*

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## *The Do's & Don'ts of Lobbying Your Legislators*



*The voice of Ohio's Professional Engineers*

## *Do . . .*

### ***In Meetings . . . .***

...Make your appointment in advance. Ask to see the member. If unavailable, ask if there is a legislative aide available. Offer the topics you wish to discuss.

...State your affiliation with OSPE.

...Once in the meeting, keep the chit-chat to a minimum; get down to business promptly.

...Introduce yourself to the member even if you have met previously. Offer a small piece of information from the district. Pass along complimentary things you have heard about him/her.

...Discuss only a limited number of issues.

...Listen as well as speak.

...Be honest, brief, direct, specific, factual--but keep it simple.

...Hand the member an information packet with newsletters, position statements, fact sheets, etc.

...Offer a copy of the materials to the staff if present.

...Be polite & pleasant--no matter what!

...When closing the meeting, offer future assistance on the issues you discussed, as well as any other issue he/she may need help on.

...When you get home, write a thank you letter within 24 hours. Restate the issues discussed and close it with your action request.

...Know your elected officials' parties, power bases, and limitations.

...Address your legislators properly, by their title.

...Refrain from taking notes until after the meeting.

...Keep your meeting details confidential; never quote what one legislator says about another.

...tell both sides of your issue--accurately.

## *Don't . . .*

...Be late.

...Assume the legislator remembers you.

...Chat away the legislator's time.

...Talk about more than 2-3 issues.

...Hand over volumes of material to the legislator. You should reduce the issues down to your points.

...Overstay your welcome, make demands or threaten the legislator with votes.

...Call or write your legislator only when you need a favor or action--or only at election time.

...Provide bad information or mislead a legislator or staffer. It probably will not work, and it will come back to haunt you.

...Write your thank you note on a post card.

...Sign or send a form letter.

...Begin a letter on the righteous side: "As a taxpayer and voter. . . ." He or she will know you are a resident of the district.

...Be rude, threatening, vague, verbose, impatient.

...Send a carbon copy to other legislators--write each one individually.

...Make a campaign contribution when you visit.

...Write the members of the House while a bill is under consideration by the Senate and vice versa. The bill may not even make it to the other chamber.

...forget that as a voter, your concern is important to your legislators.

...forget that as a member of an organization, your clout is much stronger--but use it wisely and judiciously. They will recognize it if you tell them you are a member.

...forget to meet with your legislators back home.

...Underestimate the influence of legislative staffers.

## *If you send an email or letter..*

...Address your legislator properly (The Honorable...)

...Be brief and to the point.

...Discuss only one issue in a letter.

...Identify a bill by its title and bill number.

...Use your own words and stationary with your address and phone numbers.

...Be courteous and complimentary.

...Explain family, business or political connection in regard to the issue.

...Write the governor after the bill is passed by both houses if you want to influence his decision on it before he signs or vetoes it.

...State in very definitive terms how the bill would affect you, your company and your community.

...Give legislators action requests. Ask them to vote certain ways, or be aware of a development, etc.

...Sign your letter; never photocopy a form letter provided by your lobbyists.

### ***Remember . . .***

...you have more influence with legislators from your own district than with others.

...Perpetuate a good working relationship by contacting your legislator at least 3-4 times a year. Send a letter on an issue, invite them to a chapter meeting, invite them to tour your office, etc.

...Make sure your relationship is premised on trust and mutual respect.

...Be discreet in the halls & avoid gossip.

...Write your legislators and praise them for votes in your favor.

...Your legislators will have to decide how to vote on hundreds of bills this session; help them make informed decisions!