

KFTC GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2019

ORGANIZING ACADEMY

Tips for Effective Grassroots Lobbying

KFTC members have learned valuable lessons over the years on being an effective grassroots lobbyist. Here are their top tips.

1. Clearly identify yourself. Tell them who you are, if you are representing a group, and why you or your group cares about the issue.
2. Start with a value statement that reflects your motivation for acting, one that encompasses the broader goal you seek. "I'm here because I believe every child deserves a quality education" is better than "I'm here because I want you to vote for HB 979."
3. Personalize your message. Tell your story, your experience around the issue. We all know how powerful our stories are! People are more likely to remember a personal story than a statistic.
4. Tell the truth. If you don't know an answer to something, be honest about it. Tell the legislator you will find out and get back to them. And do it!
5. Be Polite. Be friendly, but firm. Respect a legislator's right to disagree. A positive, friendly approach works best!
6. Come prepared. Practicing your story ahead of time will help you be clear and concise. If you cite data or information be able to tell where your figures came from. For our priority issues, KFTC will provide written materials to supplement what you say. With the materials in their possession, it will remind them of your issue even when you are not there. These materials also are helpful for those who want to lobby but who don't feel completely comfortable talking about the issues.
7. Make an appointment ahead of time, if possible, especially for your own legislators. Thank them for taking the time to meet.
8. Be thick skinned. Legislators may come across as dismissive and impolite. Don't let a negative experience discourage you or hold you back. Keep your cool and be polite and persistent. The experiences with friendly, encouraging and grateful legislators will outweigh the negative encounters.
9. Follow up. Let others know the legislator's position and confirm any favorable position with a thank you letter. And remember, if the legislator asked for more information get it to them.
10. You are educating the legislators. You often will know more about the issue than the legislator does. They deal with hundreds of bills each session and sometimes will not know the personal sides of an issue. You can be their best source of information. Again, the printed materials are helpful.
11. Remember that you are making a difference. Grassroots voices are important in Frankfort! Even if you don't get the answers or actions you are looking for, you are helping to hold legislators accountable and building the base for long-term change.