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Tips for Successful Lobbying

13 steps to working with your legislators to help animals

The Humane Society of the United States

1. Don't be intimidated by the thought of approaching elected officials

State legislators especially are receptive to constituent comments.

2. Be concise

Your message should be short and direct. It is fine to express your personal opinion.

3. Use all available resources

Request position papers, fact sheets, or other documentation from animal protection groups such as The HSUS. You don't need to be an expert, but the more facts and arguments you have on your side, the better.

4. Personalize your appeal

Tell how you are concerned about an issue and how it affects you, your family, and your community.

5. Cultivate legislative staff

Establish a positive relationship with staff persons. They are usually more accessible and can have tremendous influence over an issue.

6. Be honest

If you don't know the answer to something, admit it and try to get the information later. Also, when working with legislators who sponsor your bill, be sure to be up front about any potential problem areas.

7. Research your legislators

Ask around, talk to others who have worked for legislative change—on any issue—and ask their advice on which legislators are most effective or which committees are most likely to approve of your bill.

8. Identify your bill or issue clearly

Whenever you get a chance to lobby elected officials, don't just refer to your effort by the bill number. And always make it clear whether you are asking for their support or opposition to the matter.

9. During the legislative session, constantly check your bill's status

Most legislative entities have a bill status information office. At certain times, action occurs quickly and with little notice.

10. Keep things friendly

Maintain a positive relationship with all legislators—they may be in this office or a higher one for decades. Threats and hostile or sarcastic remarks are not productive. Do not create any enemies.

11. Avoid party politics

Animals have friends on both sides of the aisle.

12. Be flexible

Sometimes compromise is a must. Support legislative strategies that may save an otherwise doomed bill: adoption of sunset provisions, grandfathering clauses, and placing provisions into regulations instead of statute.

13. Say thank you

Thank everyone and let your members know how helpful key legislators were in your success.