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# What Influences a Legislator?

## The following is important to keep in mind when lobbying elected officials

*The Humane Society of the United States*

Elected officials are, first and foremost, politicians. If an elected official is up for re-election, they are often more willing to listen to interests outside their norm. The issues of a special interest group are important to them because they need that support to win re-election. The HSUS and other groups keep legislative scorecards of important votes, and politicians want to make sure that they have favorable ratings. In addition, one of the easiest and most direct ways to get to know and influence a legislator is to help them. This can be done by volunteering on their campaign. Although assisting a politician does not ensure that they will always vote your way, it allows you to spend time with them and their staff. Building and maintaining working relationships is always important.

The following is important to keep in mind when lobbying elected officials:

### **The Issue:**

Merits of the issue  
Impact on his/her district  
Possible job loss

### **Cost:**

Impact on economy or businesses  
Too much government interference  
Opponents have more clout than proponents  
Lack of knowledge  
Executive branch position

### **Political Considerations:**

Upcoming election/lame duck  
Campaign contributions  
Commitment of an interest group -- single issue voters?  
President, Governor or Mayor  
Scorecards

### **Media:**

News articles/stories  
Editorials  
Letters to the Editor  
Opportunity to gain press attention

**Legislative Considerations:**

Committee chairman  
Committee assignments  
Trade offs with fellow legislators  
Position of others in state or district delegation  
Lobbying by other legislators  
Staff advice  
Position of Political party

**Personal:**

Personal experiences and feelings  
Family members, friends, especially children  
Impact on self or others important to legislator  
Alma mater

**Outside Influences:**

Constituent contacts -- grassroots  
General public sentiment  
Celebrities, sports figures  
Chance encounters with people