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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