



## TIPS FOR TALKING TO LEGISLATORS

When you lobby, you represent the whole League of Women Voters. As a representative, your contacts with legislators are for the three purposes of:

- 1) building a permanent, friendly relationship for the League,
- 2) Lobbying, speaking in favor of or in opposition to a specific piece of legislation, or Advocacy, the sharing of general information, discussing interests, and positions, and
- 3) obtaining information.

### For personal meetings with legislators:

- Know something about the legislator's record, votes, committees, interests, and sponsorships. (Check [iga.in.gov](http://iga.in.gov) and [Ballotpedia.org](http://Ballotpedia.org)) Early in the interview thank her or him for any past support of any League position you know about.
- Go prepared. Know your position and the relevant legislation thoroughly. Take along an information packet, if possible, for the legislator to consult later. Be able to answer criticism of the League's position or offer to get further information.
- Remember that every legislator has been chosen by the majority of the voters of her/his district. The needs and motives of voters vary greatly.
- Remember that your interview may affect a later vote on some other matter, even if it does not have any apparent effect immediately.
- Confine your focus as well as possible to the League position you are discussing. If issues come up for which there are no League positions, explain that fact.
- Encourage the legislator to talk freely and present his or her side fully. Listen hard.
- Quietly note any new arguments you hear against the League position and report them to the state League issue advocate or the President.
- Don't be afraid to admit ignorance. Say, "I'll look that up and let you know as soon as I can," and follow through.
- Remember that the League is strictly nonpartisan; remind the legislator of that, if necessary.



- Keep your sense of proportion. The League issue may not be very interesting to the legislator.
- Don't wear out your welcome. Express appreciation for the legislator's time and attention. Leave the way open for future interviews.
- As soon as possible after you leave, make thorough notes (not during the interview). Share your information with others, especially the local and state LWV.
- Be prudent in your later remarks, especially in the galleries, lobbies, and elevators—even at lunch.
- **Send a note to the legislator thanking him/her for their time. Include the date and topic of your meeting.**

**For official or personal lobbying by letter:**

- Use the proper form of address, which you can usually obtain from LWV resources. Write or type legibly and neatly. Use your own words and stationery. **Don't mention affiliation with the League unless you are writing an official, approved-in-advance League letter.** Be sure you have spelled the person's name correctly. Keep copies of correspondence. Share responses.
- Choose the appropriate legislator to write to, from your own voting district. Write to one from another district only if he or she is on a committee you wish to influence.
- Don't expect a form letter to have the impact of a personal one, although you may adapt suggested text.
- Be brief and to the point. Discuss only one issue or piece of legislation in your letter. Mention the legislation by title and by number, if possible.
- Be courteous, reasonable, and persuasive.
- Include articles and editorials that the legislator may not have seen.
- Write a thank-you when a legislator votes in support of the League's position.
- When you write to more than one legislator, write/retype a new letter.