

Climate Advocacy and Lobbying in Sacramento and Washington, DC

January 4, 2024



**THIRD
ACT**



The Climate Reality Project
CALIFORNIA STATE COALITION

Part 2: Working with Legislators to pass strong climate legislation

Presenters:

Janet Cox, Climate Action California

Mary Buxton, Climate Action California

Kathy Schaeffer, Climate Reality Project - San Fernando Valley

How we advocate: Overview

- Cultivate relationships with legislators – meet regularly
- Propose bill ideas
- Strategize with staff
- Generate calls and letters from constituents
- Submit position letters
- Speak at bill review hearings
- Draft petitions, op-eds...



Effective Citizen Lobbying



Why lobby?

- ❑ Influence your legislator's vote
- ❑ Advocate for specific bills
- ❑ Promote your interests, core beliefs, and positive changes
- ❑ Educate the legislator
- ❑ Build a positive relationship with your representative

Why is it important to make your case?

- ❑ Legislators (and their staff) can't know everything; they need others to inform them.
- ❑ In the absence of engagement with people like us, our reps will only hear from professional lobbyists, industry, and political interests.

Influencing your rep's vote

🗨️ **Be a number:**

- Sign online petitions.
- Call or email the Sacramento office- keep it brief and to the point.

🗨️ **Be a person:**

- Attend town hall meetings and speak out. Introduce yourself!
- Find opportunities to thank your legislator and staff for their work.

🗨️ **Be a resource:**

- Schedule a policy conversation with an environmental aide.
- Provide information that supports your position on a bill or issue

🗨️ **Build a professional relationship with your rep and staff**

Who lobbies and How?

Paid Lobbyist

Paid by a special interest

Brings campaign cash

Communicates a single clear objective/message

Often in the Capitol

vs

Citizen lobbyist

Volunteer

Brings grassroots support

May have several objectives (although fewer is better)

Often in the District

On this mission, you're part of a group

- ❑ You're representing an advocacy group, not yourself.
- ❑ Good to work in coordination with other climate groups.
 - Base the collaboration on mutual respect and support
 - Include EJ groups and their concerns
 - Agree before the meeting on a consistent message
 - Don't contradict each other!

Relationships are vital

- ❑ **Your purpose: Pass important climate legislation, now and in the future!**
 - Good relationships ensure future access
- ❑ **Meeting with a staff member can be useful**
 - Staff assigned to bills are often very knowledgeable and have time to talk
 - Capitol legislative staff are usually more knowledgeable than district staff.
 - They can be excellent resources and effective conduits for your views
- ❑ **Don't be afraid to meet with legislators who don't share your views.** It's an opportunity to look for common ground and educate the legislator.

Know your representative

- ❏ **Before you meet, know the following about your rep:**
 - District demographics—to whom is your rep accountable?
 - Related bills rep has authored or co-authored
 - Rep's voting record on climate bills in the last session
 - Rep's top issues and viewpoints
 - Rep's committee assignments
 - Influencers and key financial backers

Building Relationships

- ❑ Attend fundraisers
- ❑ Introduce yourself and your organization each time you see your legislator and/or staff
- ❑ Volunteer for campaigns- first elections and re-elections
- ❑ Show up at events (i.e. toy drives, press conferences)
- ❑ Let the Legislative Director know which of their bills you support. When a the bill passes, email to congratulate them and express your appreciation for their work as well as the legislator's work.
- ❑ Staff members move up the ladder

When to schedule a meeting

- ❑ When you have a new representative
- ❑ Early in the cycle – to discuss your issues, ask about the rep's plans for the session, and propose bill ideas
- ❑ When you want to push a specific bill or committee vote
- ❑ On Fridays, or during a recess

Ready to schedule? Make the appointment!

- ❑ Get information: Who is the Legislative Director? Who is staffing the bill?
- ❑ Phone the Sacramento office and ask for an appointment with the Legislative Director and/or the Representative. If you are directed to the scheduler or another staffer, follow up with an email to that person.
- ❑ You may be able to schedule a meeting by emailing the Leg. Director.
- ❑ Explain whom you represent and why you would like a meeting.
- ❑ Email or call back if you don't hear anything for a few days.
- ❑ Clarify who will set up the zoom call.

Be clear on the purpose of the meeting

❑ **General fact-finding, relationship building**

- Most important to give the legislator ample time to talk about their priorities
- Be ready to discuss broader issues and possible solutions (emissions reduction, cap and trade reform, agricultural methane, etc.)

❑ **Focus on a particular bill, asking for support or opposition**

- Be prepared with facts and understanding of the opposition's arguments
- Participants can back up the facts with brief personal stories

Preparing for the meeting

- ❑ **On Zoom**, when you have a date and time, consider inviting people from other climate groups as well as constituents
- ❑ Research the member's bills and positions
- ❑ Be ready with a couple of key asks
- ❑ Prepare an "agenda" that
 - Lists or summarizes our priority issues and bills
 - Lists names of attendees, cities where they live, and organizations
 - ...and send it to the member's staff a day ahead of the meeting

Getting organized

- ❑ Be clear on **the** meeting objective, depending on the calendar and the member
 - Plan to give the legislator time to talk about priorities
 - Advocate for a **FEW** bills (list more on the “agenda”)
- ❑ Participants meet an hour ahead of time to review agenda, prioritize comments
- ❑ Clarify roles: Who will open the meeting, frame the conversation, moderate the conversation, close
- ❑ Identify people to ask specific questions *if time permits*
- ❑ Not everyone needs a “speaking part” but everyone can ask questions

Ensure a successful meeting

- ❑ Confirm the time available and don't go over
- ❑ Attendees introduce themselves only if there's time
- ❑ Set the tone:
 - Respectful, collegial, non-adversarial
 - Ask open-ended questions about your issues: You want the legislator to do the talking
 - Do NOT argue your position. Offer to send information...
- ❑ **Remember: You're building a relationship! (and collecting data)**

A few tips...

- ❑ Listen actively > reflect > be ready to pivot
- ❑ Be flexible but stay on topic. Follow-up questions are good!
- ❑ Share critical information but ***do not lecture the member or staffer!***
- ❑ Ask how constituents can support the legislator's goals
- ❑ Follow up with additional information, clarification, etc. – to member and legislative staffer from the call

Stay on Zoom after the member leaves, to debrief!

Make Your Voices Heard!

- ❑ Make a call to your state legislator's office to express your support or opposition to a specific bill
- ❑ Be comfortable calling your representative's office if you have questions or need information
- ❑ Know when to call the Sacramento office vs the District office

We Speak to Committees: “Me-toos”

- ❑ What is a “me-too” and how do you do it?
- ❑ The importance of me-toos at committee meetings
- ❑ The “silver-lining” of COVID for committee hearings
- ❑ Current status of remote me-toos in the Assembly

Take Action Now!

Sign our petition to Speaker Rivas that will allow phone-in “me-too”s to Assembly committee hearings. Every California resident should be allowed to weigh-in on potential legislation whether or not they can travel to Sacramento to offer an opinion.

[CLICK HERE TO SIGN NOW](#)

Link in Chat

Types of Written Communication

- ❑ Written communication can be very impactful.
- ❑ There are many options for emails and letters.
 - Via the legislator's website
 - Via an email action alert from an organization
- ❑ Are you writing as an individual or as a representative of a group, organization, or coalition?
 - Important to coordinate with org's & coalitions

Position Letters

- ❑ What is a position letter and why do we write them?
- ❑ How to write a position letter
- ❑ How to submit your letter
- ❑ Tips

Sign-On Letters

- ❑ For high-profile or important legislation, your organization may want to create and circulate a group sign-on letter
 - Why are sign-on letters an important tool in your toolkit?
 - How do you write and distribute a sign-on letter?
 - What if you don't have the bandwidth to submit a letter for your organization through the portal or create a sign-on letter?
 - “NASCAR” letters and floor alerts

How To Use the Portal For Position Letters

□ How to use the portal:

- Go to <https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/> to find out the status of a bill and which committees it has been referred to
- Go to <https://calegislation.lc.ca.gov/Advocates/> to register for letter submissions
- Know how to access the committee websites through <https://www.senate.ca.gov/> or <https://www.assembly.ca.gov/>

Questions?

Sponsoring today's training

- ❑ **Climate Action California:** Volunteers and coalition members take science-based positions on legislation and policy <https://climateactionca.org>
- ❑ **Third Act's Three California Working Groups:** Volunteer teams plan, organize and implement local and regional campaigns to protect our climate & democracy <https://thirdact.org/working-groups/>
- ❑ **Climate Reality Project California Coalition:** Coordinates communication and action for California's 12 Climate Reality chapters <https://www.climateproject.org/>

THIRD ACT

Third Act California Legislative Committee

Speak as **ONE VOICE** when we speak for TA:

- Watch for Action Alerts via email
- Sign on to letters provided by TA leadership
- Resources and expertise to help us advocate

Sacramento: Ruth Holton-Hodson(Chairperson) rholtanhodson@gmail.com

Diana Cassady - dlcassady@comcast.net

SF Bay Area: Mary Anne (MA) Morgan

Becky Shirley

Socal: Sally Richman - sally.richman@gmail.com

Sheila Dershowitz – sheiladoctors@gmail.com

Thanks for coming!