Part 2: Working with Legislators to pass strong climate legislation

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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
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?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paid Lobbyist</th>
<th>VS</th>
<th>Citizen lobbyist</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paid by a special interest</td>
<td></td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
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<td>Brings campaign cash</td>
<td></td>
<td>Brings grassroots support</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communicates a single clear objective/message</td>
<td></td>
<td>May have several objectives (although fewer is better)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Often in the Capitol</td>
<td></td>
<td>Often in the District</td>
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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!
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.
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
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 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
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 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
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
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:

- 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?
Climate Action California: Volunteers and coalition members take science-based positions on legislation and policy [https://climateactionca.org](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/](https://thirdact.org/working-groups/)

Climate Reality Project California Coalition: Coordinates communication and action for California’s 12 Climate Reality chapters [https://www.climaterealityproject.org/](https://www.climaterealityproject.org/)
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

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Thanks for coming!