



How to Conduct an Effective Lobby Visit in Support of Ending Marijuana Prohibition

Meeting with your state legislators and expressing your views is one of the most effective ways to influence policy. Your legislators' job is to represent their constituents, and they are very interested in where their constituents stand. State legislative districts are relatively small, and even one voice can have a profound impact.

Below you will find a list of tips to keep in mind if you wish to visit your elected officials to discuss legalizing, taxing, and regulating cannabis for adults. Take these tips to heart, and you'll find that any meeting with your legislators, even if they disagree with your stance, can be productive and informative.

Tip #1: Advance scheduling

Even if your visit is scheduled around a lobby day, it is advisable to try to schedule a meeting with your legislator well in advance. You can find your state legislator(s) [here](#). Legislators have busy schedules, and they may not be able to meet with constituents if the meeting is not scheduled in advance. Many lawmakers will meet with constituents either in the capital or in their legislative district on days when the legislature is not in session. If traveling to the capital is a challenge, you may want to note that and request an in-district meeting.

Tip #2: Professionalism, professionalism, professionalism

This cannot be stressed enough. Be respectful and professional in all ways. Dress professionally. Be on time for your meeting, and watch your rhetoric. Do not use slang for "cannabis." Do not disparage political parties, the government, or politicians. Do not wear anything displaying cannabis images — they distract from your policy arguments. If you don't know the answer to a question, do not make up answers. Email the legislator later to follow up.

Tip #3: Stay on topic

Since you are lobbying for marijuana to be legalized, taxed, and regulated for adults 21 and older, you should not bring up other issues. You should have a specific, concrete request such as co-sponsoring or supporting a bill to legalize marijuana for adult use.

Tip #4: Prepare

Know the issue. Take the time to read over talking points and responses to common concerns provided [here](#). These talking points have proven to be effective arguments when advocating for taxing and regulating marijuana for adults. Jot down a couple of key points you want to make in advance, along with the bill number (if a bill has been introduced).

Tip #5: Know the legislator

You can find your legislator(s) [here](#). This can give you some valuable insight into their background and political platforms. Knowing this, you can better prepare your arguments to address specific concerns of the legislator, and you can find out if you have a connection with the lawmaker — such as an alma matter or church.

Tip #6: Bring informational handouts

Feel free to print and bring an appropriate amount of any helpful information you may find [here](#). Do not overload your representatives with papers, but a succinct handout or two will allow them to further examine the issue after your visit.

Tip #7: Be concise

Legislators are very busy people, especially during sessions. Keep this in mind. It is encouraged to engage in some initial getting-to-know-you conversation, but move the conversation along to the issue at hand as soon as the opportunity presents itself.

Tip #8: Do not get mad

Your representatives may not agree with you; do not let this anger you. Also, you may end up meeting with staff as opposed to the actual legislator. Again, do not let this throw you. Anger is unproductive. Respectfully disagreeing and countering accusations with fact-based arguments is a better way to have your voice heard. Never talk over the legislator or staffer, and do not get combative. Many legislators come around on marijuana policy issues after further examination, but hostility will reduce their chances of doing so. And even softening the level of a lawmaker's opposition can help advance a bill. However your legislator may initially feel about your issue, it will be far better served if they see you as an informed, rational, and polite advocate for it.

Tip #9: Relax and enjoy yourself

Have fun. Legislators are typically friendly and outgoing people; it's hard to win an election otherwise. Smile and present yourself as a concerned citizen, regardless of whether you support the legislator. If

you are relaxed, friendly, and confident you will find the conversation flows better, and you'll get your points across more accurately.

Tip #10: Follow up

Regardless of how the meeting goes or the legislator's stance on the issue, always follow up the meeting with a thank you card or email. If the legislator or staffer said they would get back to you on a question, be sure to follow up politely to request an answer. Additionally, if your legislators asked any questions you could not initially answer, provide succinct answers to those questions.