

MISSOURI NEA LOBBYING 101



Lobbying, an organized effort to attempt to influence a decision, is an important part of Missouri NEA's government relations advocacy for public education. As you decide which level of government you will lobby, take into consideration the following tips.

Keep in mind why you are lobbying.

- Recognize that you are the expert on education and your community on behalf of your students and your association.
- Know your limits. Don't pretend or make up an answer. If you don't know, offer to find out.
- Play to your strengths, your expertise and experience.

Know your audience.

- Narrow the scope to the decision maker responsible for a specific issue.
- Understand the difference between executive decision makers (where one person has decision authority) and the decision chain (where a series of decisions must occur in order, as with the legislature).

Be prepared.

- Learn the decision maker's background. Start with where they are and what is going on in his or her life.
- Learn the decision maker's priorities: political history, alignment, status and future goals.
- Find common ground. Begin with areas of agreement, and respect differences of opinion as legitimate.

Build relationships.

- Give it time. Strong, healthy relationships take time.
- Build trust. Be proactive and stay in touch regularly.
- Be a resource. Once you establish trust, you may have influence just by providing information. Again, be proactive and provide value.

Learn the ropes.

- Be willing to work with legislative staff. They are trusted experts and key to persuading a legislator.
- Keep meetings short. Be timely, be brief and be focused on your ask.
- Understand procedures and customs. Learn how offices and committees work, be persistent and flexible, and explain why your meeting is helpful.

Know your ask.

- Be specific. Be sure your message can't be misinterpreted.
- Be tangible. Be clear about the action you expect.
- Know how to verify whether the legislator took action.

Support your ask.

- Define your ask. Support it with three talking points and conclude.
- All politics is local. Relate the ask to the legislator's life.
- Be open for questions. Ask if the legislator will take the action, has a position already or has questions. Listen carefully.

Don't be too political.

- Bipartisan works. Support on any issue is helpful, even if we disagree on other issues.
- Demands don't work. Rely on your ask and your talking points to persuade.
- Put issues before politics. Focus on the issue and the ask, not unrelated issues.

Use your tools.

- First and lasting impressions are important. Dress professionally, be polite and be timely.
- Be proactive. Invite legislators to back-home meetings and other in-district events.
- Keep in touch. Continue the dialog year-round by any means appropriate, including social media.

Be yourself!

- You know people. Legislators are people, too.
- You have people skills. You know how to work with students, parents or colleagues.
- You have a superpower: your story. Practice it. Tell your stories, and legislators will remember them and use them.



MISSOURI NEA CORE MESSAGES

The goal of public education is for all students to have access to a quality public school where they can develop the knowledge and skills to participate fully in our democracy and succeed in this dynamic 21st century world.

MNEA educators are deeply committed to the success of every student. Students are at the center of everything we do.

- **All students, regardless of zip code, deserve the tools and time to learn.** If we're serious about every child's future, let's get serious about what works. This means resourcing all school so that students have more one-on-one attention and modern tools and textbooks. Missouri currently ranks 47th in state share of funding.
- **We need to ensure that every child has a qualified, caring and committed teacher.** Teachers work in schools because they believe in children. Teachers strive to connect with each child, discover passions and unlock potential. We must ensure that every teacher has the resources, mentoring and support he or she needs. Teachers are best equipped to make school and classroom decisions to ensure student success.
- **Good education inspires students' natural curiosity, imagination and desire to learn.** Teachers set high expectations for all students. Students must learn writing, critical thinking and problem-solving skills through reading, math, history and science. We encourage creativity through a well-rounded education that includes arts, physical education and music. School is a place where discovery happens. No bubble test can measure a child's curiosity. Of all the things we teach kids, the most important is love of learning.

Missouri NEA's legislative priorities

- Investing in all of our students, regardless of zip code, with the tools and time to learn
- Ensuring every child has a qualified, caring and committed teacher
- Creating an effective partnership to provide an education that inspires students' natural curiosity, imagination and desire to learn

Be an Education Advocate

You can help create a better future and support MNEA's legislative effort by becoming an MNEA Education Advocate.

Education Advocates commit to:

1. Coordinate back-home meetings with their legislators.
2. Encourage MNEA members to attend Capitol Action Lobby Days and legislative brunches or dinners during the legislative session.
3. Participate in candidate screenings in the spring.
4. Stay connected through email alerts.

Together, educators can make a positive difference for students and public schools.

