

GRASSROOTS LOBBYING

What is grassroots lobbying? Grassroots lobbying is simply real people with real issues influencing legislators by interacting with them as constituents.

These are personal contacts. Do **not** use State resources when contacting legislators or other decision makers; use your personal email address on your personal computer, your own letterhead, paper, and printer.

Influences on decision makers (according to chart from NCRA at 2009 boot camp): In-person visits from constituents ranked number one in having the greatest influence; individual postal letters and email letters were somewhat influential; and form postal letters, form email message and form faxes had some to no influence. Make your efforts count, so make it personal!

Unsure who your elected officials are?

To find whom your elected officials are, go to www.legis.state.ia.us, hit “enter,” then on the left, click on “Legislators,” and then click on “Find Your Legislator.” Enter your address, hit “enter,” and it will give you a list of your federal and state elected officials.

PROPER WAY TO ADDRESS A LETTER TO A LEGISLATOR OR THE GOVERNOR:

To a State Senator:

The Honorable (Full Name)

State Senator

State Capitol Building

East 12th and Grand

Des Moines, IA 50319

...Dear Senator (Last Name):

To a State Representative:

The Honorable (Full Name)

State Representative

State Capitol Building

East 12th and Grand

Des Moines, IA 50319

...Dear Representative (Last Name):

To a US Senator:

The Honorable (Full Name)

United States Senator

Senate Office Building

Washington, DC 20510

...Dear Senator (Last Name):

To a US Representative:

The Honorable (Full Name)

United States Representative

House Office Building

Washington, DC 20510

...Dear Congresswoman (Last Name):

...Dear Congressman (Last Name):

To Iowa's Governor:

The Honorable Chet Culver

Office of the Governor

State Capitol Building

Des Moines, IA 50319

...Dear Governor Culver:

WRITING LETTERS USING THE HOOK, LINE, AND SINKER METHOD

Hook: In one or two sentences, you want to grab your reader's attention with a good **hook**, or introductory paragraph.

Line: Reel in your reader with a fluid and coherent **line** of information. This is the body of your letter. Make it personal. Tell them how the detrimental effect of the issue will affect **you** and your life.

Sinker: Use the **sinker**, concluding remarks, as instructional, service oriented and a call to action. One to two sentences is long enough.

Tips on writing to legislators or key decision makers:

Write on your personal or business letterhead, if possible. Be sure your return address is on the letter, not just on the envelope.

Keep it brief. Keep the letter to one page.

Back up your opinions with reliable facts and figures when you can.

Use your own words. Avoid templates and stereotyped phrases that make it look like a form letter. Using your own experiences will help.

In addition to your own legislators, you can write to the chairperson and committee members of the committee in charge of the legislation.

Remember email protocol.

If sending an email, make sure you include your home address so they understand that you are a constituent, or possibly identify yourself as a constituent in the body of the email.

Remember that courtesy is appropriate at all times. You are trying to inform your legislator about the impact of the bill and influence their opinion.

Proofread! After all, we are court reporters.

Do not use "above-referenced" as it is already referenced. Strike the "above."

Do not use "above" and "below" in writing. Use "preceding" and "following" instead of spatial terms.

Do not use "please find." Use "I have enclosed."

Do not use "I am writing this letter." It sounds like you are in the process.

If they sent you something, start with "Thank you."

Instead of writing, "This letter is in response..." use, "Thank you for..."

Introduction in business letters must have a smile on your face, even if pasted on.

Postscripts are appropriate only for sales letters.

Make sure that if they only read the first or last paragraphs of your letter they know what it is about and what you want them to do.

And finally.....Use your personal experiences as supporting evidence. How does this affect you, your family, or your profession? Better yet, how does this affect the community or the state? Make is personal!

Sample letter:

My Name
My Address
My City and Zip Code
My full telephone number
My email address

Date

[Address properly]

Dear Senator/Representative [Name]:

The State of Iowa faces serious budget considerations, and in your capacity as [insert committee or “my representative/senator], I appreciate you have difficult decisions to make. I ask your support to fully fund the Iowa Judicial Branch and to please oppose any legislation that would negatively affect court reporters.

I have worked as a court reporter for the State of Iowa for ____ years. The Judicial Branch provides necessary services to the citizens of the State of Iowa. The Judicial Branch’s budget is 95 percent personnel; therefore, if not fully funded, layoffs are likely to occur. The 185 court reporters employed by the Judicial Branch are an integral part of the judicial process. In addition to writing every word spoken on the record in court proceedings, court reporters provide value-added services such as clerical duties for judges, in some cases scheduling court cases, and providing realtime reporting. Realtime reporting is instant translation of court proceedings that judges use to quickly and more efficiently rule while on the bench and prepare their rulings. Realtime translation also accommodates the deaf and hard-of-hearing judges, attorneys, litigants, jurors, and witnesses in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The Iowa Supreme Court is proceeding to study the use of digital audio recording equipment in Iowa courts. If the Supreme Court decides to implement digital audio recording, it would result in the layoff of court reporters. Since I carry my family’s health insurance through my employment, if I lose my job as a Judicial Branch court reporter, I am very concerned about the quality of health care my adult autistic son would receive. He qualifies for Medicaid, but I worry that his health care choices would be limited. We are fortunate he is covered as a dependent adult on my insurance plan through my State employment.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these issues. Please support full funding of the Judicial Branch and oppose any proposed legislation that would negatively affect court reporters. I would be glad to answer any questions you have, and I would appreciate talking to you about these issues. You may contact me at the phone number and email address referenced above.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

Preparing for the visit:

Do your homework beforehand on the member.

Be early for your appointment.

Know what you want and the status on where it is.

Have an “elevator speech.” An elevator speech is getting your point across to a legislator in the amount of time it takes to ride an elevator down to the first floor.

During the visit:

State who you are and what you do. This is a good time to name drop.

Thank them for seeing you, and then get into the substance of your meeting.

Ask for commitment!

Leave your business card. If you don't own business cards, have some printed, or you can print them yourself on your computer with easy-to-use business card kits sold at office supply stores such as Staples or Office Max.

Deliver “leave behind,” or informational documentation, and GET OUT.

After the visit:

Write a thank you letter to everyone you met and highlight your points again.

Maintain communication with legislators and staff.

Sample elevator speech:

Thank you, [Name] for meeting with me. I am from Cedar Rapids, and I want to thank you for flood recovery efforts. We appreciate the strong position you have taken and the work you have put forth to start rebuilding our city. I know you are busy, so I will get right to the point. I am a court reporter for Judge _____ in _____. Because of the budget crisis, we are experiencing furloughs and may face layoffs. I ask that you vote to fully fund the Judicial Branch and that you be watchful for and vote against any proposed legislation that would negatively affect court reporters. During these economic times, we need to put people to work, not lay off 185 court reporters. Thank you for your time. Here is my card. If I can answer any questions, please don't hesitate to call me or write me an email.

POLITICAL DOs AND DON'Ts

DO:	DON'T:
<p>be or bring a constituent(s)</p>	<p>begin by saying, "As a citizen and taxpayer..."</p>
<p>treat your legislator as a friend and an intelligent citizen.</p>	<p>say, "I hope this gets by your secretary."</p>
<p>assume your listener knows nothing about court reporting and simplify complex issues.</p>	<p>send form letters or obvious computer/word processed letters.</p>
<p>anticipate questions.</p>	<p>threaten or be rude to a legislator and/or his/her aide.</p>
<p>pass along anything nice you may have heard about him/her, but do not overdo it. Get down to business quickly.</p>	<p>cover more than one subject in a contact.</p>
<p>give the gist of your argument as early in the conversation as possible – kept it short.</p>	<p>use words or acronyms that are terms of art.</p>
<p>type your fact sheets, letters, and testimony, also known as leave behinds. Be sure they include how to reach you. Leave your business card. If you do not have business cards, have some made. You can also do them on your computer.</p>	<p>give inaccurate information or purposely lie.</p>
<p>be very specific about action you need from your legislator on an issue (e.g., vote "yes" next Tuesday on HF123).</p>	<p>be afraid to say, "I don't know. I'll find out the information and get back to you."</p>
<p>remember to get results – not credit.</p>	<p>guess.</p>
<p>show your legislator how your legislative platform will help him/her and his/her district.</p>	<p>ask the public to support or oppose candidates based on their position on an issue.</p>
<p>follow up with information you have promised.</p>	<p>waste a legislator's or an aide's time.</p>
<p>be persistent, but not annoying.</p>	<p>write members of the House when the vote is in the Senate and vice versa.</p>
<p>request commitment – always!</p>	<p>press for an answer on your first visit.</p>
	<p>give inaccurate information or purposely lie.</p>
	<p>ignore your legislator and then contact one from another district for help with your issue.</p>

OUR ISSUES – MARCH 2009

At this date we have two issues to address with our legislature: **request full funding of the Judicial Branch and oppose any proposed legislation that would negatively affect court reporters.** Many legislators have heard about the threat of digital audio recording equipment. If you get the opportunity, take this chance to discuss the issue with them. Some legislators have confused digital audio recording, or electronic recording, with the Judicial Branch's Electronic Document Management System (EDMS). That is also known as electronic filing. EDMS is a document management system that will eliminate paper court files and make court files available on employees' computers and is due to go to pilot in 2009. Therefore, we should refer to our issue as "digital audio recording" instead of "electronic recording." I think some legislators hear the word "electronic" and confuse the issues.

Code sections we do not want changed:

Iowa Code Section 624.9 establishes the right to a detailed report of trial ("In all appealable actions triable by ordinary or equitable proceedings, any party thereto shall be entitled to have reported the whole proceedings upon the trial or hearing . . .").

Iowa Code Section 624.9 requires the record be made "in writing or shorthand" recognizes the importance of a court reporter in making the record.

Iowa Code Section 602.6603 mandates "[e]ach district judge shall appoint a court reporter," and "[e]ach district associate judge may appoint a court reporter, subject to the approval of the chief judge of the judicial district."

Iowa Code Section 602.6603(8) states, "If a judge dies, resigns, retires, is removed from office, becomes disabled, or fails to be retained in office and the judicial vacancy is eligible to be filled, the court reporter appointed by the judge shall serve as a court reporter, as directed by the chief judge or the chief judge's designee, until the successor judge appoints a successor court reporter. The court reporter shall receive the reporter's regular salary and benefits during the period of time until a successor court reporter is appointed or until the currently appointed court reporter is reappointed."

Iowa Code Section 602.1102:

JUDICIAL BRANCH. The judicial branch consists of all of the following:

1. The supreme court.
2. The court of appeals.
3. The district court.
4. The clerks of all of the courts of this state.
5. Juvenile court officers.
6. Court reporters.
7. All other court employees.

Iowa Code Section 602.1214:

DISTRICT COURT ADMINISTRATOR.

1. The chief judge of a judicial district shall appoint a district court administrator and may remove the administrator for cause.

2. The district court administrator shall assist the chief judge in the supervision and administration of the judicial district.

3. The district court administrator shall assist the state court administrator in the implementation of policies of the judicial branch and in the performance of the duties of the state court administrator.

4. The district court administrator shall employ and supervise all employees of the district court except court reporters, clerks of the district court, employees of the clerks of the district court, juvenile court officers, and employees of juvenile court officers.

5. The district court administrator shall comply with policies of the judicial branch and the judicial district.

6. The supreme court shall establish the qualifications for appointment as a district court administrator.