Agents of Change Lobbying Our Collective Influence for Florida’s Future

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Sponsored by the following Florida Chapters:
Altamonte Springs, Bold City, Brevard County, Dade County, Daytona Beach, Fort Lauderdale, Gainesville, Greater Miami, Jacksonville, Miami Biscayne-Bay, North Broward County, Orlando, Pensacola, St. Petersburg, Tallahassee, Tampa and West Palm Beach

Effecting Change Through the Power of Friendship and Service
A broad-based delegation of constituents (five is ideal) increases the likelihood of getting a meeting with the legislator rather than his or her staff. Fax the scheduler with your written meeting request (who, where, when, and why), and follow up with a phone call. Many offices ignore a request for meeting if it’s not made in writing. Use Links’ letterhead when faxing the request and mention that you will put a picture of your legislator meeting with you on your chapter’s website or your local newspaper. If your legislator is not available, ask to meet with at least a legislative assistant.

**BEFORE LOBBY DAY**

Scheduling of appointments should start no later than seven days before the lobby day if not sooner. This should be done by your chapter’s LDAC Chair or appropriate designate. Determine what issue(s) you will be lobbying. Because the status of legislation changes on a daily basis, it can be a challenge to select the issue(s) you would like to focus your attention on during lobby day. Your issue(s) have to be determined before a notification or scheduling letter is sent to elected officials regarding the lobby day. Most offices will not set-up appointments if they do not know what they will be discussing.

Remember, you want to get the largest benefit from our lobby day. Legislators usually have limited time. At a meeting, the participant should educate the elected official on one or two issues and shore up his or her support. Trying to discuss too many issues will only result in confusion and no commitment from the elected official.

**SOUTHERN AREA CONCERNS:**
1. Mentoring  
2. STEM Education  
3. Childhood obesity  
4. Stand Your Ground Laws  
5. Black Lives Matter
Your Lobby Visit

Meeting with your members of the state legislature or their staff and developing a personal relationship are the most effective ways to influence the legislators’ positions on an issue. Phone calls, faxes, emails, and letters are all important but are not as effective as meeting with your members of legislators or their staff.

1. Be punctual and positive. Be on time, and thank the staff person for his or her time. Even if you disagree on most issues, compliment the legislator for a vote or action you appreciated. Building rapport with staff is important in developing a long-term relationship.

2. Focus the meeting. Briefly introduce the sisters you represent, and the topic you wish to discuss. It is important to talk about only one issue and to stay on this topic. Remember, you don’t have to be an expert on an issue; legislators meet with you because you elect them.

3. Listen and gather information. Ask for your legislator’s view on an issue. Be patient and passionate and in true Link fashion, always remain polite.

4. How to start: You should each introduce yourselves and mention where you live and a brief reason for your involvement in the issue. Be sure to stress the outreach of the Southern Area. Then express appreciation for any positive actions (big or small) the member has taken that you can find in the public record. A “thank you” helps establish a cordial meeting.

5. How to discuss your issue
Clearly articulate the purpose of your visit. Be concise when you present your position. Allow plenty of opportunity for listening to your legislator’s views and concerns. Listen closely to what your legislator says -- there may be hints that will enable you to follow up with resources.

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7. Ask for a specific action
Ask for a specific request. Rather than something generic like “I want you to create a STEM Education Act.” Give several brief points why your legislators should support this legislation.

8. Promise to follow up
Say when and how you will be in touch to follow up on your request. (Example: “I will call your staff next week to follow up.”) Send a thank you letter to the staff person soon after your visit, repeating your “ask.” This letter helps to build a relationship over time with a member of the legislature and her or his staff.

It often takes several meetings to influence legislative action. A lobby visit is important to establish a relationship with a legislative office and to get political attention on an issue, but make sure to follow up with phone calls, faxes, emails, and letters to the editor.
WHAT YOU SHOULD GIVE THE ELECTED OFFICIAL

A personal meeting with a legislator is the perfect opportunity to educate your elected official about the Links, Incorporated. You do not want to overwhelm the official, but you do want him or her to leave the meeting with a better understanding of the role we play in our communities.

Some information you can put into a packet:
• Fact sheet on the Links. Many people have a misperception of what Links really do.
• Letter from your chapter president that explains why your organization supports the issue you will discuss.
• Fact sheet and information on the issue or legislation you will discuss.

After the Meeting

As soon as possible after the meeting, ideally immediately, your lobby team should spend time debriefing. Take notes to help with future work with your legislator. Follow up with a thank-you letter, recapping your key points and adding any additional information. Plan other ways to work with this office on your issue, such as generating letters and calls from other constituents.

When You Go Home: Maintaining Contact

Organize a local event focusing on an issue of concern during a recess and invite your legislators to speak. A delegation representing a broad and diverse local constituency or the promise of a large audience will help get you on your busy member’s schedule. Leave plenty of lead time to organize such an event.

Write Letters to The Editor

Letters-to the-editor are extremely effective for alerting legislative member for areas we carry about.

Elected officials carefully monitor local newspapers to gauge local opinion. By mentioning your senators or representative by name and stating the specific legislative action you would like them to take, you can guarantee that your letter will catch the attention of your local politicians/

Write a letter to your local newspaper today!

Keep it short

Try to limit your letter to 100-200 words or less, and focus on a single issue. In the first paragraph, state your main point and why the issue is important to you. (What impact does the issue have on the local community? How are you personally invested in a particular policy or piece of legislation?) Provide facts, quotes, and numbers in the second. Use the last paragraph to restate your point and make your recommendation.

- Respond to a news story
Open with a specific reference to a recent news story, editorial, or previous letter. "Recent" means no older than a few days. For national papers, no further back than 48 hours.

- Make a local connection
Your letter will be of more interest to editors of your local paper if you highlight the local impact of a national or foreign policy issue.

- Demonstrate your reach
If you know that your opinion also represents that of others, be sure to mention it. However, if you want to submit a letter signed from representatives of more than one group, be aware that most newspapers limit signatures to two or three names.

Consider your options

Submit letters to your local paper for the best chance of publication, though you may certainly submit to national publications as well. Other options include suburban or neighborhood papers, specialized magazines, ethnic press, religious publications, and college alumni magazines.
DOS
• Do learn legislators’ committee assignments and where their specialties lie.
• Do present the need for what you’re asking the legislator to do. Use data or cases you know.
• Do relate situations in his or her home state or district.
• Do learn the legislators’ position and ask why they take that position.
• Do—in case of voting records—ask why he or she voted a particular way.
• Do show openness to the knowledge of counterarguments and respond to them.
• Do admit you don’t know. Offer to try to find out the answer and send information back to the office.
• Do spend time with legislators whose position is opposite ours. You can decrease the intensity of the opposition and perhaps change it.
• Do spend time in developing relationships with the legislative staff.
• Do thank the staff for stands the member has taken, which you support.

DON’TS
• Don’t overload a legislative visit with too many issues.
• Don’t confront, threaten, pressure, or plead.
• Don’t be argumentative. Speak with calmness and commitment so as not to put the legislator on the defensive.
• Don’t overstate the case. Members are very busy and you are apt to lose their attention if you are too wordy.
• Don’t expect members of the legislature to be specialists. Their schedules and workloads tend to make them generalists.
• Don’t be put off by smokescreens or longwinded answers. Bring the legislator back to the point. Maintain control of the meetings.
• Don’t make promises you can’t deliver.
• Don’t be afraid to take a stand on the issues.
• Don’t shy away from meetings with legislators with known views opposite your own.
• Don’t be offended if a legislator is unable to meet and requests that you meet with his or her staff.
SAMPLE LETTER REQUESTING A MEETING

The Allabout Business (FL) Chapter of The Links, Incorporated will host its annual Lobby Day on March 26, 2015. Links members will be walking the halls of the Capitol to discuss issues concerning STEM, mentoring, Stand Your Ground laws, childhood obesity and the Black Lives Matter movement. Legislative action towards these initiatives could greatly impact our youth and the communities we serve.

Links members from your district would like to meet with you or the appropriate staff member on (date) at (time) for 30 minutes to provide you with information on this important issue. Obtaining your support on this legislation is critical to the youth of our state, and specifically to urban youth.

The Links Incorporated is one of the nation’s oldest and largest volunteer service organizations of extraordinary women who are committed to enriching, sustaining and ensuring the culture and economic survival of African Americans and represents over 12,000 members throughout the United States, its territories, and the international community. The (Chapter Name) has more than (number of members). Links members are business and civic leaders, role models, mentors, activists and volunteers who work towards a common vision by engaging like-minded organizations and individuals for partnership.

The members of Links in your district would appreciate a few minutes of your time to discuss how this legislation will affect your constituency. For additional information regarding Links’ Day at the Capitol, please contact (name) at (telephone number) or by e-mail at (e-mail address). Our chapter members would like to confirm all appointments by March 23, 2015. I look forward to hearing from you and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
(Name)
(Chapter)

SAMPLE PHONE CALL APPOINTMENT INSTRUCTION SHEET

1. My name is (name) and I am a member of the (your chapter name) Chapter of the Links, Incorporated. May I please speak to the scheduler?

2. My name is (name) and I am a member of the (your chapter name) Chapter of The Links, Incorporated. We will be hosting a legislative day at the state capitol on March 26, 2015. As a constituent of (elected official’s name), I (we) would like an appointment to see the representative at (times) for 30 minutes.

Make every effort to get a meeting with the lawmaker, but some circumstances will only allow you to meet with their staff.

3. The issue we will be lobbying on is ________.

4. These are the names of the people attending the meeting________.

5. Thank you for checking the representative’s or senator’s schedule. You can reach me at (telephone number or e-mail address). Always leave your name and phone number. You may have to contact the office several times before someone returns your call or confirms an appointment. Be persistent and proactive—you are calling as a voting constituent.

6. Keep very careful notes of all calls. Record the following information on the appointment report form:
   - name of the scheduler
   - when you called and the number of messages you left
   - name of person the appointment is with
   - time and place of the meeting.
**LEGISLATIVE GLOSSARY- Lobby Tool Kit**

- **Act** - A bill that has passed both chambers and has been signed by the President to become law. Often, a bill may have the word “Act” in its title when it is introduced and does not reflect if it has been officially considered.

- **Amendment** - A change to a bill or motion. An amendment is debated and voted on in the same manner as a bill.

- **Appropriation** - A formal approval to draw funds from the United States Treasury for an authorized program or activity.

- **Authorization** - Legislation that formally establishes a program or activity and sets a funding limit for that program or activity.

- **Bill** - A proposed law that is introduced in the legislature by a Member of Congress. In the House a bill is recognized as H.R. and S. in the Senate.

- **Chamber** - A place where the legislative body meets to conduct business. In the U.S. we have two chambers, one each for the House and Senate respectively.

- **Committee** - A group of legislators in the House or Senate that prepares legislation for action or the officiating chamber. Committees often schedule public hearings to discuss legislative issues. Most action takes place at the subcommittee level.

- **Concurrent Resolution** - Legislation adopted by both Chambers to express the position of Congress. As such a resolution does not have the signature of the President; it does not have the force of law.

- **Congressional Record** - The official transcript of House and Senate proceedings.

- **Conferees/Conference Committee** - The House and Senate appoint conferees to a conference committee to resolve differences between House and Senate passed versions of the same legislation. The Senate Majority Leader and the House Majority Leader appoint conferees.

- **Continuing Resolution** - Legislation passed by both the House and the Senate permitting specific Executive Branch agencies to continue operating even though funds have yet to be appropriated for the following fiscal year.

- **Cosponsor** - When a member of the House or Senate supports a pending bill, but is not the primary sponsor, they sign their name onto the bill as a cosponsor to illustrate their support.

- **Filibruster** - Delaying tactic associated with the Senate and used by the Minority in an effort to prevent the passage of a bill or amendment. Usually threatened but not executed. The House cannot filibuster as all debate is governed by rigid rules crafted by the Rules Committee setting the parameters for discussion and approved by the entire body for each separate piece of legislation. The Senate does not employ a rulemaking process.

- **Hearing** - An occasion in which evidence to support particular points of view can be brought forth to the sponsoring Committee.

- **Joint Committee** - Members of both chambers are appointed to consider matters of common interest. Such committees can speed up the legislative process by consolidating the time for hearings.

- **Mark up** - The process of amending a legislative proposal. Held by the Committee of jurisdiction, committee members can offer amendments, which if successful, changes the legislative language of a particular bill. If the bill is changed drastically the committee might reintroduce the legislation under a new bill.
**Majority Leader**- The leader of the majority party in the Senate, elected by his/her peers. In the House, the Majority Leader is the second in command in the House after the Speaker of the House and is also elected to that post by his/her peers.

**Minority Leader**- Leader of the minority party in the House and Senate.

**Recess**- Adjournment by the House or Senate for at least three days, with a set time for reconvening.

**Speaker of the House**- Elected by the majority party, the Speaker presides over the House of Representatives during the two-year legislative session.

**Whip** - Senator or Representative who serves as an internal lobbyist for the Republican or Democratic party to persuade legislators to support their party position, and who counts votes for the leadership in advance of floor action.

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**Links Day at the Capitol Tidbits**

**TRANSPORTATION:** Bus transportation will be provided from the Aloft to the Wednesday evening reception, Governors Club breakfast, Luncheon at the Civic Center and the Capitol. The first bus will begin departing for the Black Caucus Reception on Wednesday evening at 6:15 p.m. (Mary Brogan Museum 350 South Duval Street) and return at 8 p.m. The Thursday morning bus will begin leaving at 6:30 a.m. on Thursday, March 26th to the Governor’s Club. The bus will also take us to and from lunch at the Civic Center, and also return Link sisters back to their cars at 5 p.m. at the Aloft. The Capitol pick up and drop off location is across from the Supreme Court, behind the Capitol, on Duval Street.

**REGISTRATION:** Please plan to arrive between 6:45 a.m. and 7:15 a.m. for registration on Thursday morning. There you will be given your LDAC bag and goodies. Registration will be at the breakfast location at the Governors Club, 202 1/2 South Adams St. - Tallahassee, Florida 32301 - (850) 224-0650. If you would like to get a head start on things, pre-registration will be available on Wednesday, March 19th from 3:30 - 5:30 p.m. at the Aloft in the lobby. All registrations must be done IN PERSON. NO ONE CAN PICK UP YOUR MATERIALS FOR YOU.

**NO REGISTRATION MATERIALS WILL BE AVAILABLE AFTER 9:30 AM**

**BREAKFAST:** Breakfast will begin promptly at 7:30 a.m. It will include a small program and will conclude no later than 9:30 a.m..

**CAPITOL HDQ:** Our location for the day should you need a break is room 309 of the Capitol. We will be in the room from 9:30 a.m. - 5 p.m.

**LEGISLATIVE VISITS:** Please plan your Legislative Visits between 9:30 a.m. and 11:10 a.m.

**LUNCH:** Lunch will be held off site at the Leon County Civic Center. transportation will be provided by bus from the location with a return back to the Capitol. We will return from lunch at 1:30 p.m.
PHOTO: Our official Links Day at the Capitol photo will be taken after lunch on the steps of the OLD Capitol. Chapter photos if requested will also be taken at this time and sent to you for dissemination in your local media.

AFTERNOON SESSION: Our afternoon sessions will take place in the Capitol room 309. The session will include two workshops and a special symposium on the Stand Your Ground Law.

BRAG TIME: At 4:00 p.m. we will have “Brag Time” where Links are welcome to inform others about upcoming or special events going on within their chapter. We will also wrap up, have light snacks, and celebrate with fun door prizes after completing our day of advocacy.