



# MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION CENTER

*"Working to Protect and Restore Montana's Natural Environment Since 1973"*

## **Basic Tools for Lobbying the Montana Legislature**

***Personal presentation, breath mints, deference, timing & credibility***

by ANNE HEDGES, MEIC Lobbyist/Program Director

### **Words to Live By**

No permanent friends/No permanent enemies

### **Most Important Resource**

Legislative Services web site:

[http://laws.leg.mt.gov/pls/laws07/LAW0200W\\$.startup](http://laws.leg.mt.gov/pls/laws07/LAW0200W$.startup)

### **Qualifications of an effective lobbyist:**

- an intelligent command of current issues;
- a commitment to the cause, tempered by a tolerance for the human weaknesses of both colleagues and elected officials;
- enthusiasm and sincerity; and
- a sense of humor, genuine liking of people, and ability to roll with the punches.

### **Determine How You Want be Involved**

#### Offense

- Decide what you want before the legislature starts
- Will your idea cost money? Where will that money come from?
- Research the topic and know it very well
- Find a legislator to submit a bill draft request
- Find a bill sponsor
- Educate bill sponsor and lobby for bill (see below)

#### Defense

- It's always easier to kill or amend a bad bill than pass something
- Monitor bill draft requests and mark those you are interested in/opposed to
- Research issue. Create one page sheet.
- Find out who is on the committee where the bill is assigned – count votes
- Find out hearing date and attend or talk to legislator before hearing
- Organize opposition (see below)

# How to Lobby

## Lobbying from Inside Helena

- Become informed: contact groups you support, web sites, newspapers & newsletters
- Find out who is making decision (Governor, legislative leaders, committee, individual)
- Count votes
- Find out what motivates legislator – appeal to self-interest
- Find out who personally knows legislator and ask them to contact her/him
- Know your opposition: who, what, why
- Meet with legislators: in Capitol or preferably by appointment and get out of the Capitol
- Be prepared. Listen. Try and get a commitment (but don't be pushy). One page handout.
- Be brief, explicit and courteous
- Testify at hearings:
  - Arrive at hearing early to get a seat
  - Have written testimony to hand in, but DO NOT read to legislators
  - Begin testimony by saying “Mr./Madam Chair, members of the committee, my name is ...”
  - Look at committee members while testifying
  - Don't repeat what someone has already said
  - Use personal stories if possible
  - Keep it short and be respectful
  - Stay until hearing is over
  - Never stretch the truth
  - Thank committee members

## Lobbying from Outside Helena

- Become informed: contact groups you support, web sites, newspapers & newsletters
- Find out who is making decision (Governor, legislative leadership, committee, individual)
- Count votes
- Find out what motivates legislator – appeal to self-interest
- Find out who personally knows legislator and ask them to contact her/him
- Know your opposition: who, what, why
- Meet with legislators
- Contact legislators: Phone, mail, email, fax (1 page)
- Letters to the editor/Op-eds
- Be brief, explicit and courteous
- Get on action alert lists of organizations you support – ACT on that information
- Blogs