



**LOBBYING PARLIAMENT:
A GUIDE FOR NGOs**

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INTRODUCTION:

Lobbying parliament is a way for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to play a role in the process of democratic governance. Lobbying is any planned effort to influence political governance and decision-making. Lobbying take such forms as making a presentation to a parliamentary committee or meeting with a party caucus of individual MP.

In countries with democratic traditions, NGOs (including, neighborhood organizations, chambers of commerce, trade unions, environmentalists, human rights groups) spend considerable time and resources lobbying their elected politicians. They do this in an attempt to make their voices heard by their representatives and to influence their decision-making.

Through lobbying parliament you can:

- ⇒ Inform individual law-makers and political parties in parliament about community needs and impacts of policy decisions;
- ⇒ Contribute to new and innovative ways of developing policies and providing new services,
- ⇒ Bring an important public issue to the attention of parliament;
- ⇒ Defend existing rights; and;
- ⇒ Work toward improving your own and/or others' situations.

Effective lobbying of parliament depends on being well-prepared and well-informed and have a clear goal and purpose. It requires knowing how to communicate your views clearly and effectively. It also requires understanding why it is your role to take this issue to your elected representatives.

This guide provides an introduction to approaches and tactics for lobbying parliament, including:

- 1. Overview of lobbying campaigns;**
- 2. Lobbying individual MPs;**
- 3. Lobbying a Party Caucus;**
- 4. Submissions to a Parliamentary Committee;**

1. OVERVIEW: LOBBYING PARLIAMENT

When planning a political lobbying campaign you can think about two types of lobbying: *direct lobbying* and *indirect lobbying*.

A. Direct lobbying.

- A direct lobby involves meeting with MP(s), discussing an issue, arguing your cause and making concrete recommendations. There are three main venues for direct lobbying that you should consider:
 - 1) Meeting face to face with individual MPs;
 - 2) Presenting a brief to a party caucus of parliament;
 - 3) Making a submission to a public hearing of a parliamentary committee.

B. Indirect Lobbying:

- Many groups that lobby parliament also develop an indirect lobbying campaign. This involves informing the broader public of an issue, which, in turn, indirectly puts pressure on MPs and political leaders.
- Indirect lobbying is often done through the purchase of media such as newspaper and radio advertisements and TV commercials and billboards. These are very effective tools to get your message out, however, they are very expensive.
- There are less expensive indirect lobbying methods, these include: informing your fellow citizens through town hall meetings, organizing protests, door to door canvassing and surveys and the use of booths and posters, etc. You may be able to get free media attention through such activities.

C. Direct lobbying vs Indirect lobbying:

- NGOs with limited financial resources should learn how to be effective at direct lobbying of parliament. This guide will help you learn these techniques.
- You should considering following up your direct lobbying with some indirect lobbying. You can reach some of the public with the inexpensive techniques listed above.

- Doing public outreach (indirect lobbying) shows you believe your issue is an important public issue. It will impress the MPs with whom you are meeting. In addition, you may be able to attract the media and get some free publicity.

D. Planning

- The focus of this guide is on direct lobbying but below are some pointers to help you plan and run your entire lobby campaign. You can use this list to develop an overview to assist with designing your campaign strategy.

Lobby Campaign Checklist:

- get to know the facts and the legal constraints, if any, on your issue;
- think about what you want to achieve, and agree on any compromises you are prepared to make;
- understand your opposition, their point of view and where they may be prepared to compromise;
- identify MPs who may be interested in championing your issue
- identify MPs who may be sympathetic to your campaign;
- identify how different political parties will react to your campaign;
- identify influential people in the community who may be willing to support you;
- plan your campaign: Who? When? How? Direct Lobbying? Indirect Lobbying?
- involve as many members of your group as possible;
- know the political process and get your timing right in relation to it;
- be polite; be concise; be realistic;
- do not be afraid to ask for advice;
- contact the Media/Press Gallery and let them know who is involved, what your case is, what you are looking for and when your campaign events are (such as a parliamentary committee presentation);
- keep up the campaign until you have achieved your purpose - or failed to;
- back up your direct lobbying with indirect lobby such as events, publications, media appearances and other forms of publicity;
- make sure there are no open disagreements within your campaign - everyone should be well briefed on the issues; and
- have regular meetings to brief and debrief people and co-ordinate the campaign.

2. LOBBYING MPs

Meeting face to face with an individual MP can be the most effective method of lobbying. In such meetings, you can present your issue and views to a law-maker directly, without the filter of the media and away from the eyes of his colleagues. Face to face meetings are less formal and have the potential to be engaging and memorable. Through successful encounters of this kind your group can establish an ongoing and productive relationship with an individual MP.

An open and frank discussion of your issue may shed new light on the matter for both of you. The MP may receive new information that will provide a more in-depth or complex perspective. As a lobbyist, you will get feedback that may help you to refine your arguments and presentation. It is also useful to get a sense of how the particular legislator and his or her party views you, your campaign and the issue you are raising.

But beware, a unproductive meeting with a busy MP can go wrong and leave a negative impression. The key is to be well prepared and not to waste his or her time.

Here is a list of suggestions for lobbying an individual MP:

Arranging the Meeting

1. Find out how to contact each MP and party caucus (try the clerks' office);
2. Make appointments with those you want to lobby and ask how much time is available so you can use it to your best advantage;
3. Attempt to meet with any MP who you believe may be interested in or connected to your issue;
4. Attempt to meet with MPs who represent electoral districts that are particularly affected by your issue;

Preparing for the Meeting with the MP

1. Have two or three well briefed speakers;
2. Prepare a brief written summary of your case, your organisation's origin, credentials and your area of work, refer to it at the meeting and submit it to the MP and others at the meeting;
3. Agree on the order of speaking and issue each speaker will address;
4. Assign someone to take notes;
5. Arrive five minutes early,

Presentation and Discussion with the MP

1. **Introduce** everyone in your party and your organization, explain why you wanted to meet and ask if you can begin by presenting your views and concerns and then get his/her reaction;
2. **Facts and stories:** When presenting your issue and views it is important to have facts and statistics that show you have done some research. However, also find a few stories that illustrate your arguments. Stories personalize an issue and may resonate with a politician more than statistics.
3. **Stick to the basics:** Try to keep your conversation focused on a few basic points. The more complicated and convoluted your message, the greater the chance the conversation will wander into uncharted territory. If the MP you are lobbying changes the topic, gently return to your main point.
4. **Questions:** Ask if there are any questions and do your best to answer them. If you do not know an answer, say so and offer to try to find the answer and get back to them.
5. **Don't lose your temper:** Don't get angry, sarcastic or discourteous. In rare cases, you may find a MP is unresponsive or even openly hostile to your concerns. If that's the case, and you cannot find any common ground, you may wish to reiterate your key points and end the meeting.
6. **Get a commitment:** Ask your politician to do something concrete to show support for your issues. For instance, you may ask her/him to:
 - a) make a statement in the House;
 - b) ask a question in Question Period;
 - c) ask a relevant parliamentary committee to look at the issue;
 - d) raise your concerns in party caucus, help you arrange a meeting with several other MPs in their party or their party caucus chair;
 - e) invite the MP to address your group or a local meeting that you are hosting.

After the Meeting with the MP

1. Write a note of thanks for the time you were given to present your case.
2. If there were requests for more information ensure that they are followed up.

3. Keep the record of what was said at the meeting on file, especially if the MP made any commitments to your group. Files of meetings can be useful for preparing for future meetings or presentations.

3. LOBBYING A PARTY CAUCUS

Making a presentation to a party caucus can be an effective lobbying technique for NGOs and community groups. Presenting your views to a party caucus a way to influence the position of an entire party and an entire block of votes. You can also use this technique to inform the parties about an issue that you feel deserves the attention of politicians.

A party caucus gets tangible benefits from the lobby of a NGO. The NGO can provide a party caucus with expert analysis of a Bill and give advice about the short and long term impact of proposed policies and amendments. Locally-based NGOs can offer the caucus a sense of how the electorate in their area might react to new legislation. Finally, a NGO can alert a party caucus to a looming issue of which it may not be well informed.

In developed democracies, a party caucus will often ask to have a presentation by a NGO with relevant expertise, or might schedule monthly meetings with certain NGOs.

The Party Caucus and Bills

- When a new Bill is before the House, a party caucus will often debate it internally and develop a caucus position. MPs in the caucus are then expected to take this position when speaking in the House and in the media. The party caucus will attempt to vote together as a block as an expression of their common position.
- In order to be consistent in the eyes of the public, the party caucus and the leadership will attempt to take the same the position. Thus, lobbying the caucus can have an influence on the entire position of the party.

Presenting to a Party Caucus

- Your presentation to a party caucus should be tailored so that it aligns with the interests of that particular party. Framing your position in terms that are familiar and important to the party in question will make it all the more convincing to them.

Here some things to do when designing a **presentation** to a party caucus:

- Do general research on the themes that the party has been raising lately;
- Do specific research on the positions the party has taken on your issue, including how they have voted on related subjects;
- Request to meet with the chair of the caucus on a given issue and ask if you might briefly address his entire caucus;
- Be prepared to meet with only part of the caucus;

- Bring a brief handout on your position along with a longer submission if you have one (*see lobbying parliamentary committees*);
- Tailor your presentation to party you are lobbying; weave in (where possible) their previous commitments, proclaimed values and voting record.
- Meet with as many party clubs as you can: this will show you are non-partisan and will exert the greatest influence. You can use these meetings to gather useful information about the different views of the different parties;
- Keep a record of support or refusal to support your position; even refusal of support your campaign can be a useful in the media or when meeting with competing parties.

Example: Your group has a lobbying campaign on a Bill calling for an increase in education funding. As part of your campaign, you want to lobby a large party caucus whose MPs and party leader regularly call for measures to encourage economic growth. To prepare your presentation to that party caucus, you can:

- Find quotes where their party members and leadership has called for new and innovative measures to help create jobs;
- Develop arguments that show how this Bill on education can lay the foundation for economic growth and job creation;
- Provide the caucus with clear, media-ready lines that they can use in public to defend their the support of the Bill.
- Tell them that, “by supporting this Bill you will be fulfilling your commitment to work toward economic growth...”

4. PUBLIC HEARINGS BY PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES:

Presenting at a public hearing held by a parliamentary committee is a formal way for our group to participate in the governing process and influence its outcome. As open events, public hearings may be reported by the media and may, in turn, help shape broader public opinion.

Public hearings are important mechanisms for elected representatives who make up parliamentary committee. Hearings directly involve the people they represent in the development of laws and other decision-making. Hearings can also be a useful way to for a committee to gather technical information and gauge public opinion.

Parliamentary Committees

Parliamentary committees can use hearings to assist them in their various tasks. The tasks of committees include:

- ⇒ Drafting Legislation;

- ⇒ Reviewing Legislation in detail and proposing amendments to the House and the Executive;
 - ⇒ Consulting with the public on issues and new or planned Legislation ;
 - ⇒ Reviewing of performance of government departments and agencies;
 - ⇒ conducting inquiries on important issues; and
 - ⇒ Obtain information directly from government officials.
- Committees have broad powers of inquiry, including, the ability to send for people, papers and records. Committees are often required to report back to Parliament with their findings, recommendations, and proposed amendments.
 - There are usually 10-20 committees in each parliament. The assigned areas of work for each committee are defined in the Rules of Procedure for each House. If you are interested in the work of a particular committee, you may wish to ask the clerk for the description of its areas of responsibility. (See appendix A for list of committees in the BiH)

Public Hearings

All public hearings share the same elements of preparation and conduct. Some of those are set by the existing Rules of Procedure of the House. At the same time there are differences between several types of public hearings. It is common for each working body to adopt its own Rules of Procedure that follow but may expand and elaborate on the existing Rules of Procedure of the House.

Hearings are conducted for different purposes. In terms of purpose, public hearings may be divided into three categories: *legislative, supervisory and investigative*. A public hearing may, at times, serve a dual purpose such as legislative and supervisory.

1. **Legislative public hearings** are hearings to review draft laws or to examine options that may later inform the creation of a draft laws. This type of hearing allows for a public forum for the presentation fact and opinion on a proposed set of laws. Witnesses from all walks of life may be asked to present to the committee, including MPs themselves, government officials, NGOs and other citizens interested in finding adequate solutions for the subject matter dealt with by a given Bill.
2. **Supervisory public hearings** consider an act, an issue or a problem or a proposed activity, often focusing on the quality of government programs or the level of performance of government officials. A supervisory hearing also ensures that the implementation of the law by the executive is in accordance with the intention of the legislator. This type of hearing promotes effective, efficient and economical government. Members of the public may be invited to testify to gather information about the effectiveness of programs.

3. *Investigative public hearings* share many of the features of the legislative and supervisory ones. The difference rests in their investigative nature. Such hearings may be held to investigate a strong suspicion or evidence that a public official has committed an offence while acting in an official capacity or if a company or individual is suspect of a offence that has a significant public impact.

Public Hearings in the Field

- Most public hearings are conducted at the seat of parliament, but a working body may decide there is a need for a public hearing to held elsewhere. Hearings are conducted in the field to bring parliament closer to the people. It may allow witness to appear whom the issue being reviewed directly affects but who are unable to travel to the seat of parliament to testify. Hearings in the field have extra costs and are more time consuming. Committees must usually make a request to the House if they wish to hold hearings in the field.
- As a local group or NGO you might make a request to the appropriate committee to conduct public hearings in an area that will be significantly affected by a proposed law or is being affected by ongoing government policy.

Finding Information about Public hearings

- After a committee has decided to conduct a public hearing, the Chair of the committee should announce the hearing no less than seven days in advance, unless there are exceptional circumstances in which can it may be held at shorter notice.
- The announcement should be published in the parliamentary bulletin and, possibly, in the daily newspapers. You may also be able to visit the parliamentary website to find information about the work of committees.
- If you are especially interested in the area covered by given committee, contact the clerk of the committee to find out the agenda of the committee and the matters, such as draft legislation, that it will be considering. You may even wish to write to the committee requesting public hearings on a given Bill or issue.
- If you wish to make a submission, contact the clerk and inform him or her that your group wishes to make a submission to the committee on the matter being reviewed. The clerk may ask for some description of what you wish to present to the committee and/or a written submission. The clerk may also request to interview you briefly concerning your presentation.

A. PREPARING A WRITTEN SUBMISSION

Many committees will require that you submit a written submission before your presentation. The submission can provide an in-depth analysis of the legislation or subject being reviewed.

Such a document makes it easy for MPs to familiarize themselves with your views and to prepare questions. It will help the committee group and order the sequence of presentations.

There is often no set format for a written submission –check with the clerk to see if the committee has set any formal specifications. However, make sure your written submission includes the following information:

- Who the submission is from (your name, address, telephone number; and if it is from an organisation - its name, aims, membership and structure);
- The name of the committee to which it is going, and the date;
- The amount and source of any government contract entered into by your organization in preceding years, which may be relevant to your testimony
- Whether you want to speak to the committee in person about your submission (if so, give a daytime phone number);
- How widely you have consulted about the matter;
- Your comments - arrange them in logical order, be simple and brief, accurate and complete.
- If you are commenting on a Bill, first state your general position, then make detailed comments on clauses of concern;
- If you are commenting on an enquiry, use its terms of reference (available from the clerk of the committee) as a guide to presenting your views;
- End with your list of recommendations.

B. PRESENTATION BEFORE THE COMMITTEE

The purpose of presenting in person to the select committee hearing is to stress key points and clarify anything the committee members might find unclear in your written submission, if you have submitted one.

The Format of the Presentation

- The committee decides on the format and sequence of testimonies. In other countries, witnesses usually one by one give a brief presentation on their written statement and then answer questions posed by the committee members.
- In recent practice, witness panels are being increasingly used. In such cases, panelists are asked to present their views and then committee members ask questions to be answered by the *entire* panel. A committee may also decide to use an informal method, such as a seminar or roundtable, where experts present their opinions on a given subject matter, followed by an opportunity for informal questions and dialogue.

Sequential Presentation to a Committee

The following outlines how to prepare for a presentation based on the common practice of sequential presentation, where witnesses one by one present and are asked questions. However, the suggestions apply for any format of testimony.

- If you have been informed that the committee will hear your presentation, contact the clerk a day or two beforehand to confirm you are on the agenda and your speaking time and learn about any last minute changes.

1. Prepare a Summary

- For your presentation prepare a brief one or two page summary. (You can attach your summary to the front of your longer submission.)
- Your short summary should introduce who you are and highlight your main points. Some legislators say a clearly written letter or issue sheet is the most effective way to win support.
- Always bring plenty of copies of your summary. You should have enough for all members of the committee, including the clerk. Bring extra copies for other presenters who may be interested as well as for any media that might be present at the hearing.

2. Time Limits

- Committees will limit your time. Committees might allow for presentations of 5 minutes but may allow for 10 minutes. Ask the clerk if any time limit has been set. Be ready to summarize your submission quickly -in a couple of minutes- as you may be asked to do so.

3. Group Testimony

- You may decide to have several members of your group present on different aspects of your position. This can show the wide representation of your group and

the variety help retain the attention of MPs. You can also consult among yourselves if necessary before responding to questions.

4. At the Hearing

- Arrive early. This will give you chance to survey the terrain and identify the committee members As well as the committee members in the room the committee clerk(s), media representatives, and members of the public may be present.
- Do not be worried or nervous about doing something wrong. Remember that you are citizen and you and your organization have a right and also a duty to participate in a committee hearing. Elected representatives also have a duty to hear what you have to say.
- While you are waiting, listen and watch how the system works and note the points that are being followed up by committee members. You should also be ready in case you are called early.

5. The Verbal Presentation

- Introduce yourself and address the chairperson and committee members. For example: “Mr. (or Madam) Chair, members of the Committee, my name is Homer Q. Public and I am here today representing...(name of organization). We have a number of concerns we would like to raise with you regarding the matter you are looking at....”
- Make a brief statement about your submission and conclude with a summary of main points;
- Make your points as concisely as possible and use factual information:
- You may want to make an argument that your position is in the best interest of all the citizens of the country.
- Legislators may want to know: what, if anything, is being done or has been done in other jurisdictions; what other groups support or oppose your proposal; what the costs may be. If you know the answers, include them in your statement.
- Offer to help: You may want to ask if there is anything you can do to help get the proposal in question approved or defeated. This shows you and your group care enough to be willing to contribute more time and energy.

6. Questions from committee members:

- When you have completed your summary the Chair will ask the members of the committee if they have any questions. Questions are usually limited to five minutes;

- All questions and answers should be routed through the committee chair. This helps to maintain order. It also makes it easier to follow the hearings when listening to an audio recording of the proceedings.
- Take your time answering questions. It is acceptable to have a whispered conversation amongst yourselves as to who will answer the question;
- If you don't understand a question say so; If you don't know the answer, or if you don't have a group opinion or policy on a question then say so. If you are asked a question and you don't have the information with you but can get it ask the Chair if you can send it to the committee secretary later; and
- A committee member may ask what appears to be a pretty obvious question. They sometimes do this as a favour so that you can stress a key part of your submission
- Remember: while in the committee room do not to make noise or disrupt the hearing. (Turn off your mobile phone.)

7. After the Presentation

- The committee may allow you and other members of the public to stay on after your presentation and listen to subsequent testimony.
- Do not expect immediate committee action following a hearing. The committee may take some time to hear all the presenters and finish its work on the legislation or issue in question.
- At the end of the time allocated for the hearing, the committee may decide when it is sitting next and which subjects it will be considering.
- The next day you can inquire with the clerk as to the agenda of the committee and when it intends to complete the stage of hearings.

8. The Transcript and Report

- There should be a transcript of the hearing made available to the public at some later date.
- The committee will prepare a report of the hearing process that it will submit to the plenary. This report should be a public document. Contact the clerk to obtain a copy. You can make use of these records in a variety of ways.

Appendix A
COMMITTEES

House of Representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH

1. Constitutional-Legal Committee
2. Committee for Foreign Affairs
3. Committee for Foreign Trade and Customs
4. Committee for Finance and Budget
5. Committee for Human Rights, Immigration, Refugees and Asylum
6. Committee for Traffic and Communications
7. Administrative Committee
8. Committee for Accomplishing Equality of Sexes in BiH

House of Peoples of the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH

1. Constitutional-Legal Committee
2. Committee for Foreign Trade and Policies
3. Committee for Finance and Administration

House of Representatives of the Parliament of the Federation of BiH

1. Juridical-Legal Committee
2. Administrative Committee
3. Committee for Human Rights and Freedoms Protection
4. Committee for Defense and Security
5. Committee for Election and Appointment
6. Committee for Information
7. Committee for Establishing the Sameness of Texts
8. Mandate-Immunity Committee

House of Peoples of the Parliament of the Federation of BiH

1. Committee for Constitutional Issues
2. Juridical-Legal Committee
3. Administrative Committee
4. Committee for Human Rights and Freedoms Protection

5. Committee for Defense and Security and Control of Legality of the Work of Services for Protecting Constitutionality of the Federation of BiH
6. Committee for Election and Appointment
7. Committee for Information
8. Committee for Establishing the Sameness of texts in Bosnian and Croat language
9. Mandate-Immunity Committee

National Assembly of RS

1. Mandatory-Immunity Committee
2. Committee for Elections and Appointments
3. Board for Constitutional Issues
4. Legislative-Legal Board
5. Board for Political System, Judiciary and Management
6. Board for Economy and Finances
7. Board for Environment Protection
8. Board for International Relations
9. Board for Supervision and Control of Work of the Bodies and Institutions related to Field of Defence and Internal Relations
10. Board for Social Activities
11. Board for Petitions, Proposals and Public Supervision
12. Board for Protecting the Rights of Refugees and Displaced Persons
13. Board for Social Position of Women and Gender Equality