



LOBBYING YOUR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

You can engage in the national conversation about the importance of public parks and green spaces by informing your House and Senate members and asking for their support. Not sure who represents you in Congress? You can find your House member on this [web page](#) — all you need is your zip code, and you can find your senator's contact information [here](#).

In-person, grassroots lobbying is one of the most effective tools for persuading legislators and other elected leaders. A group of constituents coming together to make their voices heard about the importance of park funding can send a powerful signal to policymakers and their staff. A "lobby day" involves bringing a group or groups of constituents to spread out and meet with elected officials. Maximizing your effectiveness takes preparation. Click here for an easy checklist you can follow to get the most out of your lobby day.

Lobby Day Planning Checklist

- **Do your homework.** Find out what committees the members you're targeting sit on, whether they have sponsored or co-sponsored any relevant legislation and what, if anything, they've said about the importance of public parks or Olmsted 200. Be sure to take information about Olmsted 200 with you and remind them that Olmsted designed the Capitol Grounds.
- **Set a date and make appointments.** Aim for the policymaker but settle for a staff member; in the latter case you will often get an aide who is a subject-matter expert who understands the boss's thinking on the topic and can influence it. And make sure to let Olmsted 200 know so we can put it on our calendar of events.
- **Strength in numbers.** Rally as many fellow advocates as you can for the visit. The more constituents who show up, the more impact the visit is likely to have. (Note: Make sure to send constituents to their own representative's office; politicians are less responsive to people who can't vote for them.)
- **Have a clear ask.** Summarize your case and then have a clear request of the policymaker, usually to support a specific piece of legislation or funding. Focus your pitch on one or two specific issues on which you and your fellow advocates want policymakers' help. (See the federal and state/local advocacy sections below for specific examples.) Practice your pitch and then practice some more.
- **Schedule the day.** Plan out the day clearly and simply to ensure that everyone is where they are supposed to be on time. Also, decide whether the day will consist solely of direct lobbying or other activities such as a reception or other activity.
- **Create a Lobby Day packet for your advocates.** This will be a folder with all of the information your grassroots lobbyists need for a successful day:

- The day's agenda
 - Their individual list of appointments, including times and locations
 - A map showing where the offices are located
 - A letter from your organization or coalition asking for the legislator's support on the specific issues you're talking about
 - Talking points highlighting the main arguments and facts you want to present
 - Information about Olmsted 200 and the issue(s) on which you're lobbying which you can leave with the legislator or their staff
 - A Lobby Day report form your grassroots lobbyists can fill out summarizing with whom they met, what feedback they received, and any follow-up is required.
 - A draft thank you letter which the activist can send to the legislator afterward.
- **Be flexible.** We remain in the grips of an unchecked pandemic, complicating travel and in-person meetings and sometimes making them impossible. But like many other aspects of life, lobby days can translate into the virtual world: Use an online video platform for the meeting and then take advantage of the medium to build a slide show to go along with your presentation. Offer to email the salient points afterward.
 - **Treat this like a business meeting** because it is one for the legislator and/or their staff. So, dress appropriately, be on time, courteous and direct, as you would in any professional setting.
 - **Follow up.** Make sure your advocates send their thank you notes — whether by snail mail or email — to the person(s) with whom they met, recapping the points they made and reminding them of anything they committed to do. Also, collect and review the reports, noting other follow-ups you need to do.