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.
2. 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 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 an offence that has a significant public impact.