



# Careers in Government Relations/ Lobbying

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Simply put, lobbying, or government relations is advocating a point of view, either by groups or individuals. However, lobbying involves much more than persuading others. Its principal elements include researching and analyzing legislation; monitoring and reporting on developments; attending congressional or regulatory hearings; working with coalitions interested in similar issues; and educating government officials, employees and corporate officers on the implications of various legislative changes.

## **Types of Lobbying:**

There are two types of lobbying - direct and indirect. Direct lobbying involves meeting with members of Congress and providing them with information pertinent to an active piece of legislation. Methods of direct lobbying include personal meetings, phone conversations, written letters, mass mailings, and petitions. A lobbyist who works in Washington will mostly likely use direct lobbying techniques. However that is not always the case. When the issue is far-reaching, sometimes indirect lobbying techniques are used with direct lobbying.

Indirect lobbying, which is also called grassroots lobbying, enlists the help of the community. Although there are many people involved in this type of lobbying, a professional lobbyist is often needed to set up and organize the different methods used. Most lobbying of this type takes place at the state and local level.

Methods of indirect lobbying include massive campaigns for writing and calling members of Congress. Because of the methodology, indirect lobbying is very time consuming. However, the use of the media has been a powerful tool in grassroots lobbying. The more media attention that an issue receives the more likely that Congress is going to take up the cause. Lobbyists gain media attention by writing stories for newspapers and magazines as well as appearing on talk shows to discuss the issues.

## **Levels of Lobbying Organizations:**

There are three different levels of government that a lobbying organization can lobby. They are Federal, state and local. Most national lobbying organizations do not lobby just at the Federal level but also at the state and local levels.

At the Federal level there are many different organizations involved in lobbying. People who are targeted at the Federal level include members of Congress, White House staffers, and directors of government agencies. The issues range from guns to the environment to the elderly. When looking for an employer, a prospective lobbyist needs to keep in mind the issue of interest

Organizations that lobby at the state level deal with issues that pertain directly to the state or to state laws. Most of the organizations are the same as at the Federal level. A lobbyist at the state level mostly works with state politicians. Lobbying at the local level is most likely to be indirect lobbying. Most large organizations have local chapters that work on lobbying local politicians.

## **Career Paths:**

Most of those seeking careers in lobbying begin with volunteer work on political campaigns, in State Houses, governmental agencies, or on Capitol Hill. In fact, the American League of Lobbyist indicates that best training for potential lobbyist is experience in a congressional office. They indicate that even the most menial position on Capitol Hill provides an understanding of the process unlike anything in a classroom.

Because the industry is very competitive, many positions are filled by networking. Without experience or contacts, college graduates may generally start a lobbying career in an entry level administrative position. With experience, graduates can often move to the mid-level of an organization. Typical entry-level job titles with experience include issues analyst, research analyst, research assistant or associate. Salaries vary based on experience and professional contacts. Private sector companies typically pay more than non-profit and public interest organizations.

Moving in and out of government, sometimes known as the "revolving door," usually increases marketability in both the public sector and private sector. There are few straight line careers in lobbying as these positions are influenced by the ebb and flow of politics, or opportunities in the government. From a position as a research assistant, a graduate could become an analyst or manager within a lobbying organization or might find a position on the staff of an elected official or government agency.

### **Qualifications Necessary:**

Government experience in the legislative or executive branch is a highly regarded qualification. At minimum, comprehensive understanding of governmental processes and legislative procedures is needed. Strong communications skills, both written and verbal, are also essential. Excellent people skills, high energy, flexibility and willingness to work long hours are important. The ability to compromise is often critical.

People interested in lobbying careers should consider volunteering on political campaigns or interning with a government agency. The contacts developed through volunteer work and the experience analyzing issues and understanding government processes can be invaluable. A graduate degree in law or in public affairs/public policy is often necessary for advancement in the field. The most important entry advice is network, network, network. Internships, volunteer work and part-time jobs can lead to valuable contacts and information.

### **Typical Employers:**

Employers consist of lobbying firms, public interest organizations, trade and professional associations, corporations, law firms, political action committees and political parties. A sample listing of each follows:

- Lobbying Firms (Tops in DC): Cassidy & Associates (cassidy.com); Patton Boggs (pattonboggs.com); Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld (akingump.com); Greenberg Traurig (gtlaw.com); Wan Scoyoc (vscdc.com); Swidler Berlin Shereff Friedman (swidlaw.com); Piper Rudnick (piperrudnick.com).
- Public Interest Organizations: American Association of Retired Persons; Children's Defense Fund; Congressional Black Caucus; National Council on the Aging; NEA; People for the American Way
- Trade & Professional Organizations: American Nurses Assoc.; American Petroleum Institute; American Psychological Assoc.; National Restaurant Assoc.; Society for Human Resource Management;
- Law Firms (Tops in Atlanta): King & Spalding (kslaw.com); Alston & Bird (alston.com); Kilpatrick Stockton (kilpatrickstockton.com); Troutman Sanders (troutmansanders.com); Powell Goldstein (pogolaw.com); Sutherland Asbill & Brennan (sablaw.com); Morris Manning & Martin (mmlaw.com).
- Political Action Committees: connected with Trade and Professional Organizations.
- Political Parties: Constitution Party; Democratic National Committee; Green Party; Libertarian Party; Republican National Committee;

### **Resources:**

American League of Lobbyists – [www.alldc.org](http://www.alldc.org)

Washington Representatives Online – <http://www.lobbyists.info>

Congressional Quarterly – <http://public.cq.com>

*The Lobbying Handbook* – "hands-on" guide for aspiring lobbyists (<http://www.atlasbooks.com/marktplc/00593.htm>)

*The Congressional Internship Book* from [www.Internships-USA.com](http://www.Internships-USA.com) \*\*\*

(\*\*\*contact the Career Center at 706-542-3375 for the Username and Password)

See "Campus Links" section on DawgTRAK ([www.career.uga.edu](http://www.career.uga.edu)) for the following resources:

- Vault Guide to Capitol Hill Careers
- Vault Guide to the Top Government & Nonprofit Employers