

# How to Lobby Your Elected Officials on Net Neutrality, Reclassification and Internet Freedom

Say the word “lobbyist” and people often conjure up images of high-priced lawyers in fancy suits. But the reality is that all of us can lobby our members of Congress. Every day in Washington, corporate lobbyists visit Congress to influence policymaking on communications issues.

The outcomes of these decisions are vital to the many millions of Americans who know that the media affect every aspect of our lives. But legislators need to hear from more than big business – they need to hear from the public, too.

Policymakers are public officials, and it’s their job to serve the public interest. Face-to-face meetings are one of the best ways to remind them of this obligation. While in Washington, these legislators are lobbied heavily by media companies. So it’s important for legislators to hear from you when they’re back in district.

Here’s how you can get started:



# Setting Up a Meeting With Your Members of Congress

*If you're participating in a meeting that has already been scheduled, you can skip to the next section.*

**Make an appointment.** Call the legislator's home district office and ask for the scheduler's name and contact information. We recommend contacting the office by email and, if you have access to a machine, by fax. In your message, include your name and contact information, note the issue you'd like to discuss during the meeting and suggest a range of times that you can meet. Follow up with a call to the scheduler within a few hours of sending your request. You can download a sample meeting request letter here: [http://www.freepress.net/sites/default/files/resources/indistrict\\_meeting\\_request.doc](http://www.freepress.net/sites/default/files/resources/indistrict_meeting_request.doc)

**Recruit your community.** Assemble a small group of fellow constituents to attend the meeting with you. Reach out to your friends, neighbors and other concerned community members. The best meetings involve between four and eight attendees. If you have fewer than four, your impact is diminished. If you have a lot more, not everyone will have a chance to speak.

## Preparing for Your Meeting

*Definitely take some time to read up on the issues and familiarize yourself with the topic, but remember that your personal experience is the most important thing you will bring to the meeting.*

**Plan carefully.** It's best to have one topic per meeting. In this case, our topic is protecting the open Internet and supporting our free speech rights by reclassifying broadband under Title II of the Communications Act. We believe this is the best way to protect Net Neutrality, and we know that Congress can play a crucial role in encouraging the Federal Communications Commission to take action.

**Prepare.** Agree on a few key talking points and write them down. Research your legislator's record on the issue you will be addressing. Also make copies of fact sheets that you can share with other attendees before the meeting. You can find additional resources at [freepress.net/indistrict-meetings](http://freepress.net/indistrict-meetings).

## What to Expect at the Meeting

*This is the fun part! Here are a couple of tips on what to expect during a meeting and ways to make it a success.*

**Expect a brief meeting.** Plan to have each participant in your group briefly make one important and unique point during the meeting. Leave time for the legislator or staffer to ask questions and respond to your request for action. Note that meetings with a legislator can be as short as 10–15 minutes, though meetings with legislative staff may last longer.

**Be polite, clear and concise.** Tell the legislator how the issue affects you personally and provide facts and examples to support your argument. Keep the tone positive.

**Ask for a specific action.** For example: "Will you ask the FCC to reclassify broadband as a telecommunications service under Title II of the Communications Act?" It's OK if the legislator or staffer needs to get back to you later with an answer.

**Document the meeting.** Assign one person in your group to take notes so you can report back to others about what was said. It's also useful to bring a digital camera or your phone and to ask the legislator or staffer to pose for a picture with the members of your group while you hold signs. You can download signs at: [freepress.net/indistrict-meetings](http://freepress.net/indistrict-meetings).

**Exchange contact information.** Make sure that you get a business card from the person you meet with. If you have a card, leave it behind.

## Follow Up and Next Steps

**Send a note.** Send a thank-you note right away and watch for your legislator's action on the issue. If a commitment has been made to you, make note of whether there is follow-through.

**Let us know how the meeting went.** We'd love to hear about your meeting. Tell us about it at [indistrict@freepress.net](mailto:indistrict@freepress.net).

**Share your success stories or tactics with others.** Blog about your experience and share photos. Report back to your community what you've learned and discuss next steps together.