

# HOW TO LOBBY YOUR LEGISLATOR

**L**obbying to convince any individual of the merits of your position requires an understanding of the rationale and values that supports that belief. Your goal is not to threaten or antagonize, but to influence them based on your knowledge and understanding of the issues and your progressive values.

## **Be Prepared —Before You Lobby, Do Your Homework!**

### ***Know Yourself***

Be aware of your own values and morals. Understand how progressive values differ from conservative values. Such knowledge will enable you to create a stronger, universal, message.

*See pages 3 and 4 for more information about progressive values and resources.*

### ***Know Your Organization***

If you are speaking on its behalf, you will want to be a credible representative. Be fully aware of your organization's positions and their development as well as the other organizations and with the legislature.

### ***Know Your Legislator***

Attempt to understand the conservative values behind your legislator's positions which may include:

- record on related legislation and/or votes (be aware of any prior favorable commitment to your cause);
- party, position, and tenure in legislative and political power structure;
- constituent pressures;
- general predispositions;
- responsiveness to various kinds of personal interviews (sensitivity to legislative attitudes about approach is essential).

### ***Know Your Issue***

Start by expressing the **values and morals** behind your view. This will pivot the discussion to your framework-not theirs. Use analogies to make a point. Tell a brief story in 60 seconds or less on how conservative legislation hurts people-kids, seniors, and single mothers. Always tie negative impact to children (unprotected innocents) and seniors (folks who worked hard and are not respected). Go light on the facts and details (Put most of them on a single sheet of paper and leave it.). Phrase the argument in your own words. Don't be surprised if it appears you are more knowledgeable. No one can be expected to address every question. Help pursue an answer and report back.

### ***Know Your Opposition***

It is preferable to anticipate the opposition and answer their arguments positively before those arguments surface publicly. Understand their conservative values. See pages 3-4 for more information.

## **Effective Individual Communication**

*Your maximum influence comes in addressing your comments directly to your own legislator.*

### ***The Personal Visit***

Perhaps the most effective method of transmitting your message, a personal visit allows both of you to connect names with faces. In communication afterward, you will have established yourself as a known concerned constituent. If your legislator is holding a hearing or workshop, try to attend. It is a good time to meet your legislator informally.

If your representative is not available, ask to meet the legislative assistant. S/he can generally be expected to be at least as well informed as your representative, and may have more influence than you suspect.

### ***The Telephone***

The telephone can be an effective tool. Remind the legislator of any previous contact. If the member is not available, speak with the legislative assistant.

During the federal legislative session, a toll free “hotline” is available (1-800-562-6000) through which information on the status of bills can be obtained. Messages can be left for your legislator. They should be brief and specific-emphasize progressive morals and values. Leave your name, address and phone number.

### ***The Letter***

**Letters** are important for the legislator and/or staff. The amount of mail on a single piece of legislation frequently helps determine the legislators’ approach to an issue. One well written letter will often prove more weight than a formal petition with many signatures. For this reason, it is generally considered better to express your opinion as an individual rather than as a member of an organization whose positions may already be well known to legislators.

**Mailgrams** are a quick, dramatic alternative to the standard letter. They may be sent anywhere and delivered the following day. The minimum charge allows for 50 words.

**Faxing** is a way to get your message to the committee immediately. You can also call the committee directly with your message, be sure to get their fax number at the same time.

**Email** can be an efficient way to send messages for those with computer capability. You can find individual addresses under Senate or House Home Pages [www.leg.wa.gov](http://www.leg.wa.gov)

### ***Timing***

Timing is everything. Make your call at a strategic time — just before a vote, for instance, or immediately following action by your legislator in support of your cause. Write when you know a piece of legislation is pending before a committee or when a bill is about to come before the full House or Senate.

## **Some DOs and DON'Ts for Progressive Advocates**

### **DO**

- ✓ Address your Senator or Representative properly.
- ✓ Identify yourself immediately at each contact. Public officials meet too many people to remember everyone.
- ✓ Know the status of the legislation. Refer to a bill by number whenever possible.
- ✓ Use your own words.
- ✓ Be brief and explicit, courteous and reasonable.
- ✓ Establish your own credentials or expertise on the subject of legislation under consideration.
- ✓ Give legislators succinct, easy to read literature; highlight important **values, morals**, and arguments. Their time is limited.
- ✓ Write the chair or members of a committee holding hearings on legislation in which you are interested if you have facts that you think should influence his or her thinking.
- ✓ Get to know legislative staff and treat them courteously. Their cooperation can make or break your chances to reach the legislators themselves.
- ✓ Always keep off-the-record comments confidential.
- ✓ Write to say you approve, not just to criticize or oppose.
- ✓ In a letter include your address and sign your name legibly.
- ✓ Keep the door open for further discussion despite any apparently negative attitudes.

### **DON'T**

- ✓ Don't use conservative language (It activates their values.) like Obamacare or Right to Work.
- ✓ Don't begin, “As a citizen and tax payer” (your elected representative knows we all pay taxes).
- ✓ Don't apologize for taking his or her time. If you are brief and to the point s/he will be glad to hear from you.
- ✓ Don't be arrogant, condescending or threatening toward legislators or their staff.
- ✓ Don't argue or back recalcitrant legislators into a corner where they take a definite position against you.
- ✓ Don't make notes of a conversation while talking to a legislator.
- ✓ Don't send copies or form letters unless you have taken the time to include a personal note.

*Portions adapted from League of Women Voters of Washington, 2004*



# Progressive Value Messaging

***Goal: Change the public conversation & advocate for progressive values!!***

## Uses

- ✓ Regular and Social Media
- ✓ Campaign Speeches & Literature
- ✓ Letters to the Editor
- ✓ Volunteer Solicitation and Leadership
- ✓ One to One Conversations

## Assumptions

- A. Individual beliefs (or frames) are thinking. All thinking is in a frame defined by values or beliefs. Thought is physical in nature.
- B. Framing is the 1<sup>st</sup> step in the thinking process; frames screen information in and out of the brain. Appeal to individuals through their values.
- C. Words frame an issue in the brain. Individual words have values attached to them and move thinking towards a frame.
- D. Framing messages around values, morals, and emotions is universally used in business marketing; backed by scientific research.
- E. Frames communicate outside issue (topic) silos; they cut across multiple topics like healthcare, civil rights, and foreign policy.
- F. Universal basic values: Up is better than down, forward is better than backward. More is better than less.
- G. Most people have a combination of conservative and progressive frames in their value system (brain).
- H. Reason and emotions are not opposites. They are partners and collaborate in the brain.
- I. Decisions are made unconsciously and before we are consciously aware of that decision. This is hardwired into us as humans. The conscious brain rationalizes decisions; it does not make them. Decisions (votes) are based on values and morals-not issues.
- J. For stronger messages, use analogies to express progressive values. The communicate better than facts & information.
- K. **Don't use an opponent's frames or word choices**-it promotes their values and policies (not yours). You work against yourself.

View/Value Frame	Conservative Beliefs (Values)	Progressive Beliefs (Values)
Basic View of World	Strict Father (Male Only) Approach to Family (Only one top authority-individual or business)	Nurturing Parent to Family (Common good or government is the top authority)
General Frames (or beliefs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Private over public (government).</li> <li>- Men over women.</li> <li>- Man, over nature.</li> <li>- U.S. over rest of the world.</li> <li>- Christian over non-Christians.</li> <li>- Business/self-reliant individual over community.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Balance of private and public.</li> <li>- Balance of men and women.</li> <li>- People work in harmony with nature.</li> <li>- U.S works in collaboration with rest of the world.</li> <li>- Community or partner approach.</li> </ul>
Success	Individual Basis: Responsibility for yourself comes first. Success comes from self-discipline. Belief: Lack of success = lack of morality	Community Basis: We are stronger together. Provide government support to protect the community, empower people, and increase opportunity for all-not a select few.
Government	Government takes away individual incentives for success. Safety nets: immoral.	Government protects and supports the entire community. Supports you to give individual freedom and liberty.
Social Contract	Responsibility is limited to the individual/business. Not accountable to community.	Responsible to others and community; help build, support, and empower others. I benefited, I need to pass it forward.
Achilles' Heel	Private prosperity depends on the public for success. Personal success was built on community support provided by others. Wants to shift or frame the public conversation away from progressive values and morals. Actions don't match their "talk."	Current approach avoids advocating for progressive values & morals. Prefers to talk about issues (what) not the values (why). Uses conservative frames to talk about issues to both conservatives and progressives. Communications about policies has limited success-doesn't motivate other progressives to action.

## Sources

The Little Blue Book, The All New Don't Think of an Elephant, George Lakhoff (University of California-Berkeley)  
 George Lakhoff Videos on YouTube

## Conservative/Progressive Overview

Topic	Conservative Beliefs (Values)	Progressive Beliefs (Values)
<b>Common Sense</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An end justifies the means. So, it is okay to cut corners and take advantage of others. Take care of yourself first.</li> <li>Doesn't want to talk about morals, values, or ethics or use them in decision making.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Empathy for others. Responsible to others in community. Use the good Samaritan or "golden rule" approach. Mutual support for good.</li> <li>Authority-ethic of excellence; living by what you say.</li> <li>Democracy is "caring citizens" caring for others.</li> </ul>
<b>Economics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Profit is a major goal. Creating jobs is not a major goal. People are only resources to be used-equal to equipment or natural resources.</li> <li>Against government regulations (barrier to more profit)</li> <li>No connection between government, business and consumers.</li> <li>Standalone as an individual or business against the world.</li> <li>An end justifies the means if it profits the business.</li> <li>Free market is competition. Let the market decide. No authority above it. Self-reliance/discipline is the way to success.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workers are profit creators and deserve a fair share of the profits.</li> <li>Caring citizens acting through the public or community (government) is a way to expand freedom and opportunity for all.</li> <li>Government created corporations and has a right to limit their impact on the community through laws and regulations.</li> <li>Government is needed to control (provide protections) the excesses of businesses that harm the public good.</li> </ul>
<b>Public Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Business is always a preferred choice and knows better-so private schools run by businesses must be better.</li> <li>Parental choice is good for the individual and trumps all.</li> <li>Public education is immoral because it is delivered by government-regardless of how effective it is.</li> <li>No responsibility to a social contract (mutual support) with others.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public schools increase freedom and opportunity for all.</li> <li>Public schools are the heart of community and need to be protected.</li> <li>Private prosperity not possible without public education/support.</li> <li>Responsibility to pay it forward; public schools do this.</li> <li>Cuts to public education deny freedom of equality.</li> </ul>
<b>Voting Rights</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If you can't meet requirements-you are not disciplined or self-reliant. If you have no self-discipline-you don't deserve to vote.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Voting by all is necessary for democracy and freedom.</li> <li>No barriers are to restrict ability to vote (basic right).</li> </ul>
<b>Environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nature is <u>not</u> an ecological system.</li> <li>Nature is a free resource to exploit for profit by businesses. Exploiting nature is just a part of a "cost &amp; risk" formula.</li> <li>Individual actions are insignificant. Look to the past.</li> <li>Transfer risk from the corporation to the public.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nature <u>is</u> an ecological system.</li> <li>Nature belongs to the entire community &amp; globe.</li> <li>Rely on scientific evidence-guide our actions</li> <li>People have a great impact (destruction of forest and species) on the earth and climate; we can control this. Work with 'Mother Nature.'</li> <li>Corporations are responsible for damage to the community.</li> </ul>
<b>Government</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The private (business, industry, banks, media) sector works to "maximize" profit and have no moral obligation to the community (government) for its success. (I earned it myself!!)</li> <li>Government oversight is not moral; even when government hires private contractors.</li> <li>Government regulation gets in the way of individual action.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Government has a moral duty to protect and empower the community.</li> <li>Adequate government resources are needed to protect the community.</li> <li>Widespread freedom/opportunity needs the government.</li> <li>Regulations are needed to protect the community against organized greed and crime.</li> <li>Rejecting federal money denies you your right to help Wisconsin.</li> </ul>
<b>Healthcare</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Insurance companies know better than consumers; okay for them to decide your health &amp; life and govern you for <u>their</u> benefit (profit). Charge you as much as they can "get away with."</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individuals have a right to decide <u>their</u> health &amp; life.</li> <li>Government regulations limit the ability to inflict harm on us. Regulations provide protections for the "common good."</li> </ul>

Source: Scott Wittkopf, Frame for the Future, [www.frame4future.com](http://www.frame4future.com)