

Guide to the Lobbyist Program



Harvard Model
Congress Asia

INTRODUCTION

Dear Lobbyist,

Welcome to the Lobbyist Program, one of the most engaging and social programs at HMCA 2008! As a lobbyist, you will work behind the scenes to represent a lobbyist group in the halls of Congress. You will draft legislation, testify in committees, hold press conferences, and sway the votes of influential senators and representatives, all in the name of promoting your cause.

In the most basic level, lobbyist groups represent citizens who have shared beliefs about particular issues. These interest groups are sometimes accused of being “special interests” groups that monopolize policy-making in Washington on behalf of tiny minorities of rich and powerful people. However, lobbyist groups actually play a fundamental and constructive role in government: they organize public dissatisfaction into focused political entities and inform Congress of public sentiments. They also provide specialized knowledge in their areas of expertise. The groups you will represent at HMCA all hold passionate beliefs. *Do not be afraid to adopt an equally passionate tone when advocating your interests and ideas.*

At Harvard Model Congress Asia, members of Congress are lobbied by seven organizations, each a widely recognized group that stands for the interests of many people. The **American Civil Liberties Union**, better known as the ACLU, promotes the civil rights of individuals. The **Cato Institute** is a Washington-based, libertarian think-tank promoting limited government, individual liberty, free markets, and peace. The **Heritage Foundation** is HMC’s most conservative lobbyist group. It is a political think tank that analyzes issues ranging from international relations to the environment. The **Council of State Governments** is an organization that focuses on issues that are, or ought to be, dealt with at the state, not the federal, level of government. The final lobbyist group at the conference is called **Lobbyists for Hire** will represents the interests of a number of smaller groups, namely Iranian dissidents, teacher unions, environmentalists, and labor unions. Together, this group will serve as a flexible yet knowledgeable and persuasive organization.



You will work for one of these groups as part of a team of peers. You will need to master the art of persuasion as you seek to influence lawmakers and the laws they write. As an advocate for a specific organization, success is defined by your ability to guide favorable legislation through Congress and onto the president's desk for his signature.

Your most valuable commodity as a lobbyist is information. Asking members of Congress for their support is not enough; you must give members concrete reasons for why they should vote your way. At the conference, fellow lobbyists will attack your arguments and members of Congress will question your positions. Be prepared to take on all critics. Preparing for the Lobbyist Program requires researching your organization's beliefs and understanding the reasons for those beliefs. The more prepared you are, the more confident, convincing, and ultimately successful you will be.

PREPARATION

Writing Position Papers

As you prepare, you will write three detailed position papers explaining your group's stance on three specific issues that congressional committees will consider at HMCA. In addition to reading and studying the briefings for these issues, you will have to conduct research to learn the nuances of your lobbyist group's position on these issues.

From beginning to end, position papers are about persuasion. As you write your papers, focus on promoting the opinion of your group. Do not merely report information. Instead, use every fact to build your case. Begin your papers by summarizing the issue and explaining why your group cares. Then, explain your group's basic position. Discuss your organization's reaction to recent political developments. Finally, offer specific solutions that your group supports. Your proposals should put your group's ideology into practice. Be precise and eloquent as these papers will be the basis for your testimony in front of Congress, and congressmen will use your ideas in formulating legislation. Some questions you may want to consider when writing:

- Why has there been a call to change the laws on this issue?
- How have existing laws been justified?
- Are there examples (in this country or another) of laws similar to the proposed changes? Have the effects of these laws been what your group would like to see after the passage of this legislation?
- What competing arguments will your opponents present and how should you respond?



Try to find statistics and quotations that bolster your case. On Capitol Hill, numbers rule; they bolster the most persuasive arguments for congressmen. Additionally, numbers function as evidence that congressmen can use in their committees if they agree with your argument. Information--not just persuasion--will help your side convince Congress of your aims.

Finding Information

To write a position paper, you need to do individual research in addition to reading your program's briefing. Start with your lobbyist group's website. Each organization's site provides thorough explanations of key issues; most sites also include news releases and transcripts of congressional testimony given by the group's leaders. These sites present real-life examples of how to persuasively lobby for your interest.

Do not be shy about contacting these organizations. Their business is influencing public opinion, and you are a member of the public. They will be able to send you information and put you in touch with experts who can discuss specific issues with you. If you have questions, the HMCA staff is also available: e-mail us or ask your faculty advisor to contact us.

At the Conference

At the conference, lobbyist groups will have a dedicated HMCA staff member and its own headquarters. You will spend most of your time elsewhere — testifying in Congress and lobbying members one-on-one. But you will report to your headquarters regularly to update your lobbyist group on your progress, confer with your colleagues, and coordinate your efforts. You will also have the opportunity to host social events where you can meet more informally with influential members of Congress and personally make your case. The staff member working with your group will help you develop strategy and check in with you throughout the conference to advise and assist you. Remember that as you go about your business at the conference, you will play many roles. A few of these are discussed below.

LOBBYISTS AS...

Substantive Experts

As committees hammer out the details of legislation, senators and representatives will call on you for expert testimony. When you testify, you will have the chance to argue your side without interruption



for a short time. After you speak, members of Congress will ask you questions about your testimony. Testifying is your opportunity to get your message out to an entire committee. When you testify:

- *Be organized:* If you get nervous, you can fall back on your outline.
- *Be clear and straightforward.*
- *Be emphatic and exciting.*
- *Respect the committee:* Senators and representatives expect deference.
- *Use facts and quotations:* Present statistics or quotations that members can turn around and use in debate after you have finished testifying.
- *Appeal to the head and the heart:* Your job is to convince any way you can; if reason and logic alone do not make your case, try emotional appeals.
- *Be specific:* Identify the practical consequences of a bill and spell out how real people would be affected by the legislation under consideration.
- *Never forget that you represent thousands, and sometimes millions, of Americans:* the same people who are the constituents of these representatives and senators.
- *Use question time to your advantage:* Questions will show you which points committee members want to know more about before making up their minds. The best method to convince a congressman during this time is to give him a detailed and insightful answer. Opponents who try to make points of their own by asking hostile questions have already made up their minds. Use these opportunities to address the rest of the committee, especially moderates who are not sure which side to take. On the other hand, your allies in committee might ask you about particularly strong arguments you made, giving you a chance to reiterate them.

Speech Writers

In addition to making speeches on your own, you can help write speeches for members of Congress to deliver in committee. Members will want to prepare their own remarks, but you can give them useful suggestions. Provide facts, statistics, and quotations. Supply arguments to counter objections raised in committee. This lets you communicate directly with the entire committee even when you are not testifying.

Informants

Working with a committee is much easier if you identify your allies in each committee early. You will not be in any one committee all



the time, but your allies will be. Keep them well-informed. Another way to strengthen your efforts is to form coalitions with other lobbyist groups early on. When you ally yourself with other groups, members of Congress will hear your message more often and from more sources. You cannot propose legislation in committee, but your allies can. Work with them to draft legislation.

Also, you cannot invite yourself to testify, but your congressional allies can. Make sure they know you want to testify. Allies can invite you for testimony as well as ask friendly questions while you testify. When you develop close relationships with them, you can ask your allies to pose certain questions that will underscore your main points, and you can prepare your answers ahead of time.

You act as your allies' informant. While your allies already believe in your cause, neutral legislators may be more receptive to facts and arguments presented by fellow members of Congress rather than by lobbyists, even if you are the ultimate source. This way, members of Congress become lobbyists for your side. In addition to making allies among members of Congress, meet with members of HMCA's Presidential Cabinet. They advise the president on legislation, and bills that have presidential support are more likely to pass.

Liaisons

You can also engineer alliances between members of Congress. Look for chances to bring together senators and representatives who have similar ideas. Find supporters for members who are drafting favorable legislation and build a coalition that will pass a bill acceptable to your group. Also, act as liaison between reporters and committee members, setting up interviews for your allies and arranging television appearances.

Social Butterflies and Letter Writers

Schmoozing. Schmoozing is informal, unstructured socializing. Many of these conversations with members of Congress will be more personal than the ones you have when you testify.

Caucus. When committees are in caucus, you can mingle with the members and lobby one-on-one. Caucus times present a great opportunity to help members draft legislation.

Social Events. The lobbyist program will hold a couple of invitation-only events. Prominent members of Congress will be invited by congressional leadership, giving you the chance to persuade them of your cause in a more informal setting.

Letter Writing. Like schmoozing, writing letters is a personal way of communicating with senators and representatives. Letters give



you a break from the on-the-spot tension of testifying. They are helpful in getting through to committee members who resisted your other efforts, swaying moderates to your side, and in thanking allies. Make sure to always have a pen and a pad of paper with you, to scribble notes and write letters to your allies.

Media Personalities

The HMC newspaper is published daily and distributed to every delegate at the conference. You may write editorials and submit them for publication in the opinion section of the paper.

After passage through committee, bills are debated and voted on by full sessions of the House and Senate and, if passed, are examined by the Cabinet and president. Editorials help introduce your side of an issue to people who have not yet addressed that topic.

Besides using the print media, you may call press conferences, at which you speak in front of reporters and answer their questions. Furthermore, as a lobbyist, it is your job to be both seen and heard. Do your best to come up with even more, creative ways to express the views of your organization!

LOBBYIST GOALS AT THE CONFERENCE

At the start of the conference, each lobbyist group will come up with a set of goals to accomplish during the four days. The goals will relate to the briefings that each lobbyist receives and will be very general, such as “ACLU Goal: enact laws protecting women’s rights.” They will serve as a guideline and agenda for your work at Harvard Model Congress Asia 2008.

With carefully researched and articulated position papers, your group will have already outlined a plan to achieve your goals. A good position paper will address the obstacles to reaching the desired objective; you will thus already know what to expect at the conference and have some strategies prepared for overcoming those obstacles. Moreover, your position papers should be presented to congressmen as a method of arguing for points you want addressed. Remember, a bill may contain other points irrelevant to your concerns so long as you achieve the objectives your group’s constituency considers important.

We hope that you are looking forward to debating and testifying at the conference as much as we are to seeing you perform. The lobbyist program requires you to think on your feet, build coalitions, and clash with your ideological opponents. You will be one of the most powerful, influential, and sought-after delegates at the conference. We look forward to meeting you, and encourage you to bring this briefing,



your position papers, and all other materials to the conference, as you will be referencing them during your activities. If you have any questions, please contact us!

Sincerely yours,

The 2008 HMCA Lobbyist Chairs:

Lewis Bollard (lbollard@fas.harvard.edu)

Leslie Dyke (ldyke@fas.harvard.edu)

Joshua Lachter (jlachter@fas.harvard.edu)

