

HOW TO ORGANIZE A LOBBY DAY

A carbon pricing Lobby Day (or “Advocacy Day” or “Legislative Action Day”) is an organized day where members of your state carbon pricing coalition convene and meet with local lawmakers to promote carbon pricing in your state. Lobby Days are some of the most effective ways to demonstrate broad support for carbon pricing, attract media attention, and push bills in your state legislature. Plus, there is no replacement for face-to-face interaction between advocates and lawmakers. A successful Lobby Day requires careful planning in order to effectively handle the logistics of arranging meetings between participants and lawmakers. Here are some tips on how to successfully do it:

PRE-PLANNING DECISIONS

The more effectively you plan for your lobby day at the state capital, the better the outcome, and the more seriously the elected officials will view carbon pricing as a policy. Before contacting legislators and participants, you should carefully consider the following decisions:

SET A DATE

Determine the date of the lobby day and notify potential participants as early as possible. When setting the date you should consider the legislative calendar, making sure that the legislature is in session and lawmakers are in the building. It’s common for legislatures to have a ‘chamber crossover deadline’ for bills (the date bills must pass to the second chamber). It might be smart to plan your lobby day before this deadline, or during the last few weeks of the legislative session when lawmakers attract a lot of attention.

Estimating participant needs: Begin by estimating how many participants you will need to have an effective Lobby Day. Is it 15 or 500 people? Also carefully consider the type of participants you

want to have. Do you only want business partners, health experts, local environmental activists, or a mixture of many backgrounds? Deciding this early on will influence how you go about recruiting for the lobby day.

FIND A STAGING LOCATION

When selecting a staging area for your lobby day activities, be sure the location’s capacity is large enough for the number of participants expected. Additionally, ensure that all of the technical equipment you might need is available, and that the area is accessible for people with disabilities. Reserving a single location for the entire day allows participants to leave their belongings, such as bags and coats, in that location instead of carrying them around to meetings.

Figure out if you need volunteers: In most cases you can’t possibly do everything before and during the lobby day, so enlisting support from volunteers is often necessary. These volunteers can help prepare materials, reach out to potential participants, and serve important roles during the lobby day. These roles may include to: sign in participants, meet guest speakers and introduce them around the room, handle transportation, arrange any food pickup/clean up, and be in charge of technical issues.

ADDITIONAL TIPS FOR PLANNING

Work closely with offices of your legislative champions and/or bill filers.

You should reserve any space needed well ahead of time. Other lobbying organizations will likely be trying to use space close to or in the statehouse around the same time as you are.

Plan for a whole day event, with attendees arriving in the morning and leaving at the end of the working hours.

Consider providing food for participants. Another option is to create a list of affordable, nearby lunch options.

RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS

When recruiting potential participants you should attempt to get your carbon pricing coalition member organizations to mobilize their existing membership bases. Then you should reach out to other local groups that work on clean energy, climate change, or environmental activism. One group whose members have an active understanding of carbon pricing are the local chapter of the Citizens Climate Lobby (CCL). In other states, such as Massachusetts, local CCL chapters have worked closely with the statewide carbon pricing coalition.

If you are going to call or email your participants, here are some important things to convey:

This moment in time is critical to the campaign and the issue. Be ready to answer why you need this participants help

The positive impact that their lobby day attendance may have on passing a carbon price

The great opportunity to participate in the legislative process and possibly meet with their elected lawmaker(s)

PREPARING PARTICIPANTS

Getting participants ready for the lobby day is critical to its success. Many people will have little experience advocating, and most will not be experts in carbon pricing. It's your job as the organizer to ensure that they feel comfortable meeting with legislators, and are able to communicate effectively and in a way that advances the carbon pricing bill(s).

PRE-DAY TRAINING

Before the lobby day you should organize opportunities to do 'lobby day trainings' to get participants comfortable with the day's agenda, and give them an opportunity to ask questions.

Although in-person trainings are preferred, conference calls also allow more people to participate.

During the training you should include: 1) an explainer of how to lobby, 2) an in-depth briefing on the specific carbon pricing bill(s), and 3) opportunities for questions.

TIPS FOR MEETING WITH LAWMAKERS

Designate meeting leaders and note takers.

Remind participants to dress appropriately. They want to look professional and dress in business attire. Lobby days usually involve a lot of walking, so encourage comfortable shoes.

It is generally not appropriate to schedule meetings between non-constituents and a lawmaker. Never try to 'trick' a legislator into thinking they are meeting with a constituent when they are not. Their time is generally limited, and it can be extremely counterproductive as it creates animosity towards the policy issue at hand and reflects poorly on the cause. It is okay to have a non-constituent in a meeting if they are considered an expert, a member of a partner organization, or are a deeply knowledgeable advocate.

Put together lobby day packets for your attendees and make the information available to participants prior to the lobby day.

ITEMS TO INCLUDE IN LOBBY DAY PACKETS

The day's agenda outlining where and when your members should be

Document summarizing their lawmaker appointments, with times and locations

Abbreviated and clear talking points explaining carbon pricing and the benefits of it

Lobby day tips

Legislator and district bios (if available)

Handouts for elected officials (see "Leave Behind Materials" below)

Map of the statehouse, and an office directory (if possible)

A letter from the lead organizer or Climate XChange staffer thanking your members for taking part in the lobby day

Name tags, preferably pre-printed and professional looking

Lobby day meeting follow-up report form

Cell phone numbers of others in group and lobby day organizers

GETTING APPOINTMENTS

In general, elected officials want to ensure they understand the benefits and consequences of each particular piece of legislation on their constituency. For this reason most are predisposed to want to meet with constituents on an important issue like carbon pricing, but you still have to do a few things in order to get a meeting with a lawmaker on the day of the lobby day.

SCHEDULE MEETINGS A FEW WEEKS IN ADVANCE

Some offices allow you to schedule meetings months in advance, while other offices require you call a couple of weeks out. You should try to confirm meetings with key lawmakers as soon as possible so you can begin to plan the activities of the lobby day around the meetings.

WHO SCHEDULES MEETINGS

Scheduling these meetings is a huge undertaking, and largely determines the success of the lobby day. It's recommended that you organize meetings and which participants will be in those meetings in a centralized location, such as a spreadsheet.

Who you meet with: Always try to get sit-down meetings with the legislator, before agreeing to talk with staff. Participants often take a day off work to come to the lobby day, meeting with the actual legislator makes them feel empowered and like their efforts are impactful. With that said, sometimes lawmakers are unable to meet during the time periods you have selected, in which case a

sit down with a key staffer can be just as effective in advancing carbon pricing.

REQUESTING THE MEETINGS

Once you know the date and have determined a timeframe, you should reach out to the schedulers and request 15-20 minutes of their time. If an office is unable to meet with participants have them drop in on the office and leave materials during the day.

TIME GAPS

Participants may be new to the building and require extra time to navigate between meetings. Make sure to include at least 15 minutes (maybe more) in between each meeting. It's recommended that you schedule all meetings on the hour, or half hour. Also leave time for lunch in the middle of the day.

LEAVE BEHIND MATERIALS

You don't want to overwhelm the legislator, but you do want to leave them with a better understanding of the benefits of a carbon price in their state. To do this you can leave extra materials behind for the lawmaker or their staff to review.

A 1 or 2 page handout which clearly explains what carbon pricing is, what the bill(s) are hoping to accomplish, and talking points on the state benefits of carbon pricing is sufficient. Try to avoid giving them too many materials and information. Make sure that the bill numbers, full name of the carbon pricing legislation, and lead sponsor's name are clearly displayed.

During the lobby day you may also want to leave behind letters of support from other constituents that weren't able to attend the Lobby Day.

If Climate XChange has done any public studies on the benefits or carbon emissions reduction impacts of a carbon price on your state, leave a copy of the study with your legislator.

SOCIAL & TRADITIONAL MEDIA

A key measure of success for a lobby day is not just having positive meetings, but creating a large

presence and establishing “buzz” for the carbon pricing bill(s). Properly engaging traditional media and leveraging the amplifying benefits of social media are the only ways to create this buzz. In politics, the appearance of power is power, and media engagement is how you can build this appearance.

TRADITIONAL MEDIA (NEWSPAPERS, LOCAL TELEVISION OR RADIO)

One measure of success is if you can get a statewide media outlet to cover your lobby day. Having this happen helps create added buzz for the carbon pricing bill(s).

Try to engage with the local media outlets of the legislators you are meeting with as well. Lawmakers and their staff constantly engage with these local news sources, and having a story in one about constituents meeting with the lawmaker will get attention.

A week before the lobby day you should send out a media advisory to local reporters as well as radio and television producers. Then send out a more detailed press release the day of the lobby day.

During the lobby day introduce yourself to reporters you meet, this helps form a connection and will make it easier to pitch a carbon pricing story to them in the future. Another useful way to do this is to thank them via email if they have written an article relevant to or on carbon pricing.

SOCIAL MEDIA (LINKEDIN, TWITTER, INSTAGRAM, FACEBOOK)

Promote your lobby day on your social media accounts with a unique hashtag, updating your followers on the lobby day outcomes and showing the public how much support carbon pricing has in your state.

Make sure participants to take plenty of pictures, especially with lawmakers you meet with.

Encourage participants to post on social media using the lobby day hashtag.

DURING THE LOBBY DAY

MORNING KICKOFF

Its common to have a morning briefing or kickoff to start the lobby day. Allowing people to meet at a central location helps with day-off logistics, and can get people excited. Consider having the bill champions and other key legislators give keynote addresses during this time. Also, make sure to take some time to go over the agenda for the day, explain the packet, go over talking points, and thank participants for being there,

AFTERNOON

During the day keep your central staging area staffed with a volunteer or staff at all times, both to watch personal belongings and to answer any questions participants might have. Depending on the size of the lobby day, and the complexity of the statehouse, you might also want to have volunteers spread out in the building to help guide participants to their meetings.

Make sure you also have a process for collecting post meeting forms, and thanking participants one last time.

POST-LOBBY DAY

REVIEW POST-MEETING FORMS

Review the meeting forms and perform any follow-up actions needed from them.

WRITE A FOLLOW-UP ARTICLE

Wrap up your efforts with an article or blog for your local coalition’s newsletter summarizing the results of your lobby day. The article could include the number of participants, the number of offices visited, the number of legislators that agreed to supported the issue, links to courage by local media, and/or the legislators you still needs to persuade. You can include quotes from participants as a way to feature them in the article too.

THANK PARTICIPANTS

In the weeks following the lobby day have the organizer send a thank you email to all volunteers. In the email you may want to summarize the outcome of the lobby day, include links to media pieces about it, and maybe even include a brief post-lobby day survey.

FOLLOW UP WITH LEGISLATORS

One of the most important aspects of a lobby day is the legislator follow up. Send a thank you note (via email or fax) within a week of the lobby day. Thank the legislator and/or the staffer for their time and support (if applicable). If they still haven't committed to supporting carbon pricing, respectfully ask them to again. Make sure to be friendly and professional, and also offer to provide more information if they need it.

If the legislator signals favor for your bill in any way (voting it out of committee, cosponsoring it, votes for it on the floor, etc) have the lobby day participants who met with them reach out and thank them for supporting carbon pricing.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Keep in mind that the lobby day is a means to an end (passing carbon pricing in your state), not an end in itself. For this reason always make decisions within the context of upcoming legislative deadlines, gaining support from key lawmakers, and future interactions with the carbon pricing bill(s).