



Lobbying your councilperson may seem like an intimidating prospect, but don't stress - lobbying is actually a lot of fun, and elected officials always appreciate meeting with students who are passionate about an issue and know what they're talking about. With a little bit of preparation, a successful lobby meeting is easy to pull off. The important thing to keep in mind is that lobbying is ultimately about building a relationship with your elected official. If you present your asks clearly and concisely, and then follow up effectively, your elected official will not only be willing to work with you - he or she will want to.

This guide walks you through the process of lobbying, from beginning to end. Take some time to read through it, and contact your Regional Organizer if you'd like to set up a training call with STAND's Advocacy Coordinator. In general, your RO is here to be a resource to you, so never hesitate to get in touch with them for help with any of these steps. And don't forget to keep your RO up to date on your effort - how your lobby meeting went, whether your resolution passes, any media coverage you get, etc. We love to publicize chapter stories!

Early Preparation

Try to reach out to other relevant groups on your campus or in your community - an Amnesty International chapter, a faith group, etc. - who might be interested in sending a representative to the meeting. The more diverse a group attends your meeting, the easier it will be to demonstrate broad support for a genocide prevention resolution. That said, avoid overcrowding the meeting - you should not bring more than four or five people.

If there are any groups that are interested in supporting your effort but unable to attend the meeting (or if you already have enough people who will be attending the meeting itself), ask them to write letters of support that you can bring to the meeting.

Setting up your Appointment

The process for setting up a meeting with your councilperson will vary by town. However, if you go to your city or town's website, you should be able to find their contact information. If you're having difficulty, contact your Regional Organizer and they should be able to help you out!

You should call your councilperson's office to set up the meeting, rather than emailing - emails are easily lost or ignored.

When you call you should:

- Introduce yourself and give a one- or two-sentence explanation of what you'd like to meet about (Example: "Hi, my name is _____ and I'm the leader of an anti-genocide organization at _____ High School/University/College. I was hoping to meet with the councilman/woman or someone from his/her office about passing a city/town resolution for Genocide Prevention Month")
- Ask if the councilperson would be able to meet with you for about 20 minutes within the next two weeks or so. If not, ask if anyone from his/her office would be able to meet with you.
- Have a few days and times that work for your group in mind - the more flexible you are, the better!
- Once the meeting is confirmed, make sure you let the scheduler know how many people will be in the meeting, and what groups are going to be represented.



Before your Meeting

Compile the following materials to bring to your meeting:

- STAND's outline of the proposed resolution content
- Articles from your campus or local newspaper about your effort to pass a resolution, or recent events hosted by your group
- Petition signatures in support of the resolution, if you were able to gather a solid number (at least several hundred)
- Any letters you collected in support of the resolution
- Your contact information

Meet with everyone who will be attending your meeting to work out who will say what, and maybe even run through a practice meeting. You shouldn't be so rehearsed that it sounds like you're reading off a script, but make sure you know exactly who is going to be covering which topics so you're not interrupting each other.

Contact your Regional Organizer if you'd like STAND's Advocacy Coordinator to do an online training with your group.

Do a bit of background research on your councilperson, specifically to see if they've done any previous work in the area of genocide prevention (or human rights more broadly). It's OK if you can't find anything - local government officials typically do not deal with these types of issues. However, if your councilperson (for example) supported funding for a local Holocaust Museum or serves on a local human rights commission, these might be good things to mention in your meeting.

At the Meeting

General points

- Arrive early, but not too early - 5 minutes early is perfect
- Dress professionally - business casual is great!

Introduce yourself

- Everyone at the meeting should introduce themselves, giving their name, school, and what group they're representing
- Give some brief background on STAND, your chapter, and your previous anti-genocide efforts in your community
- Take this opportunity to show that the anti-genocide movement has broad support in your community: mention past media coverage of your chapter (and give copies of articles, if you have them), how many people generally come to your events, etc.

Thank your councilperson for any previous work they've done in this issue area

- If you weren't able to find any previous efforts by this particular councilperson, feel free to skip this step
- However, if they've done anything particularly helpful related to genocide prevention or human rights (for example, supporting funding for a local Holocaust museum), you should mention this

Give some background information

- It's sometimes good to start with a question: "How much do you know about the issue of genocide in the modern world?"
- Talk briefly and broadly about the issue of genocide: mention that genocide has continued despite the promise of "Never again," and identify areas where acts of genocide or other serious mass atrocities are ongoing (Sudan, Syria, the DRC, and Burma)
- Mention that there is a nationwide movement focusing on genocide prevention (of which STAND is the student component)
- Finally, note that the movement observes April as Genocide Prevention Month, due to the fact that many historical genocides originated during the month of April (see the proposed resolution content for examples)



Present your ask

- Be as explicit as possible: ask your councilperson to introduce and support a resolution designating April as Genocide Prevention Month in your town, and expressing the Council's support for measures to prevent and stop genocide
- Give your councilperson the document with the proposed resolution content; mention that these are the points that your group would like to suggest for inclusion in the resolution, but of course that you'd be willing to discuss additions or changes

Discussion

- Ask the councilperson if he/she has any questions or immediate comments
- If the councilperson seems hesitant, ask them directly what additional information they would need in order to move forward on introducing a resolution
- If you're asked a question you don't know the answer to, it's perfectly fine to say, "I don't have that information right now, but I can get it to you."
- Stay on topic and be polite

Conclude the meeting

- Conclude by asking the councilperson whether he/she is interested in moving forward on introducing a resolution, and if so what the next steps are; you want to leave with a clear understanding of his or her position
- Ask for their contact information, give them yours, and ask when would be a good time for you to call to follow up

After your Meeting: be sure to follow up!

The follow-up is just as important as, if not more important than, the meeting itself. Be sure that you:

- Send the councilperson an email within 24 hours of the meeting. Thank them for taking the time to meet with you, provide any additional information that they asked for, and politely remind them that you'll be calling to follow up at the agreed-upon time.
- Call at the scheduled time to follow up and check in on how the process of passing a resolution is going. If by this point there's little or no progress, ask what you can do to make it happen.

If new developments arise - for example, your campus newspaper publishes an article about your effort to pass a resolution - contact the councilperson via email to let them know. Remember, lobbying is about building relationships, so take advantage of any excuse to continue the relationship!

Be sure to update your Regional Organizer about how your meeting went, and anything you need from STAND in order to effectively follow up (for example, help addressing a question that you didn't know the answer to).