



HOW TO BE A VIRTUAL LOBBYIST

Quick tips for a successful virtual lobby visit:

- ▶ **Complete our Pre-Lobby Visit Checklist** *before* September 15, the National Day of Action!
- ▶ **Attend the live Lobby Visit Prep Meeting on September 15.** During this Zoom Meeting you'll meet with your team (everyone who is joining your lobby visits), and your Captain will help assign roles. Check out the Lobby Visit Roles Sheet to learn about the roles you can play.
- ▶ **Get your technology ready.** Show up on September 15th with your phone and/or computer ready. Take some time in advance to familiarize yourself with our Prime Advocacy tool.
- ▶ **Join your lobbying calls 5-10 minutes early.** During the time you are waiting for members of Congress or their staff to arrive on the line, you can address any technical difficulties and make sure everyone knows their roles and who will be speaking when.

Play-by-play of each lobby visit:

1. Make the introductions.

(Name, hometown, if you live in their district, and relevant profession or identity—i.e. faith leader, veteran, student, teacher, LGBTQ parent, etc.). If there are many advocates on your call, designate a few people to speak, and say you are joined by X number of advocates from your state/district.

Introduce Americans United.

You can say something like:

"We're from Americans United for Separation of Church and State, an advocacy organization that represents over 300,000 members and supporters in all 50 states, including people of all religions and no religion, who all believe that church-state separation is the best way to fulfill our country's promise of religious freedom for all."

2. Describe the Do No Harm Act, and what it does.

Share the facts. You can use the Do No Harm Act fact sheet.

"We're here today to support the Do No Harm Act, H.R. 1450 / S. 493."

3. Share your story.

Explain your personal stories and experiences to persuade your member of Congress to support the bill.

4. Make the ask.

If the member has not co-sponsored the bill: *"Please co-sponsor the Do No Harm Act."*

If the member is a co-sponsor: *"Thank you for co-sponsoring the Do No Harm Act. Please hold a hearing and pass the bill."*

5. Thank them for their time.

6. Fill out the Report Back form to let us know how it went.

Do:

Know your legislator.

Before each visit, check to see if your legislator is a co-sponsor of the Do No Harm Act, and tailor your arguments accordingly. Co-sponsoring means they have agreed to support the bill in advance. Refer to the Co-Sponsors List in the Virtual Action Center.

Get personal.

Bring up personal, local, or community examples. Personal stories help legislators better remember you and your requests. Anyone can repeat talking points, but only you can share your story. Why is the Do No Harm Act important to you, your family, and your community? Have you ever faced discrimination, and how did it make you feel?

Stay on message.

There are hundreds of issues important to Americans United and to all of us personally, especially during these difficult times. The power of this day is that we are all holding virtual visits with hundreds of legislators on one, unified message. We chose this message because we hope that the House will soon be considering this bill and we want to build momentum. It can be tempting to veer off-topic, but it will dilute our effectiveness. If you'd like to discuss another issue, you should definitely contact your legislator's office separately after your calls today.

Don't:

Don't be afraid to say, "I don't know."

You may encounter a question from a legislator or staffer that you cannot answer. Never make up an answer or tell them something that isn't true. It's much better to say that you don't know and that you'll get back to them later! Simply email AU staff at lobbyday@au.org and we will help you answer their question. It's a great excuse for you to get back in touch after the visit.

Don't be disappointed if you're talking with a staffer.

Capitol Hill staff have a vital role in shaping policy and provide important information to lawmakers. By working through a trusted staffer, you can make as big an impact as talking to a legislator.

Don't argue.

It's ok if a legislator doesn't agree with us and makes that clear. Thank them for listening to you and express your hope that they will continue to review the documents we've sent and reconsider their stance. And be respectful. We always want legislators to maintain a positive view of AU and our passionate supporters—even if we disagree on everything, there might be future opportunities where we have common ground.

Don't get into voting or the election.

During these visits, you shouldn't make electoral statements about Republicans or Democrats as a whole, or express support for or opposition to certain candidates or parties in the upcoming election. As a 501(c)(3) nonpartisan organization, AU may not endorse or oppose political candidates and parties due to the Johnson Amendment. **Here's the key:** you can say that President Trump or Senate Republicans have harmed religious freedom, but you shouldn't tell legislators not to support President Trump in November, to endorse Democrats, or not to vote for Joe Biden. While you may make partisan political statements during a personal meeting with a legislator--today, you are representing AU!