

Why Do We Lobby?

Lobbying is easy.

Lobbying is not something that takes years to master. One person does not have to do everything or know everything to be effective at lobbying. Most elected officials will tell you that personal stories are the best thing for them to hear when they are considering whether or not to support a particular bill. “Too often these elected officials look at papers and they don’t see faces. They need to see faces,” said Local 1500 member Jeff Guardado. “We have to lobby to speak out for those who don’t have the opportunity to have their voice heard.”

You can change laws and make a difference.

By making the issue a staple at state lobby days, UFCW members have been instrumental in convincing state legislatures to pass minimum wage increases. “Legislators are too often out of touch with working people,” said Local 1189 member Diana Tastad. “They need to hear stories about not being able to feed our children. They don’t know what it’s like to go to bed hungry. The companies we work for spend money on lobbyists and are here all the time. We don’t have that money, but we have our voice. That’s our power. We have to show up to be heard.”

Policymakers need to hear from workers.

Too often when the word “lobby” is tossed around, people think “wealthy” and “special interest.” By talking with your elected officials about your concerns, you will make them associate “lobby” with “worker.” “We have to be here to hold politicians accountable,” said Terry Payne, a member from Local 1059. “We elect them and by being here we’re able to ensure that they’re supporting us. A majority of legislators are receptive to our concerns; we just have to be willing to voice them.”

Lobbying helps to find real solutions.

In California, workers were tired of being forced to go to work sick because they couldn’t afford to take a day off. To solve this problem, UFCW members in California began an aggressive lobbying campaign supporting paid sick leave. Soon after, a bill was signed into law that guaranteed workers up to three paid sick days a year. “It is exciting to see a law pass that we lobbied for,” said Local 1428 member Peggy Macias. “Too many workers just accept laws or take them for granted. More people have to realize that by showing up at the Capitol and talking with legislators we can change things for the better.”

Lobbying builds our movement.

We lobby because it’s another way for us to advance workers’ rights. Elected officials will be more likely to pass laws that support us if they know our stories. No matter what the issue is – equal pay for equal work, fair schedules, paid sick leave, safe line speeds, comprehensive immigration reform, or retirement security – we have to lobby our legislators to ensure the opinion of workers is heard in the halls of power.