

OREGON COALITION OF LOCAL HEALTH OFFICIALS

2019 Legislative Toolkit – Lobbying and Educating for Health Officials

Lobbying for Local Health Officials

Lobbying is a way people can play an active role in the government and is a constitutional right for all Americans protected by the first amendment. Often government employees are intimidated by the thought of lobbying because they are not sure what they can and cannot do. See below to some questions local health officials commonly ask about lobbying. As each local jurisdiction has its own restrictions, be sure to check with your leadership about your own ability to lobby.

Lobbying activities in Oregon include:

- Direct lobbying (oral or written) of legislative official to influence or attempt to influence legislation
- Direct lobbying of others to solicit their efforts to include or attempt to influence legislation
- Attempting to gain the goodwill of legislators

Does federal law restrict me from lobbying?*

There are federal restrictions on lobbying referred to as the Byrd Amendment. Generally, if a public employee is solely paid with federal funds they cannot lobby during work time. If they are paid partially with federal funds and partially with other funds, they can potentially lobby using the other funds but should check with their supervisor and their funding guidelines. For more information about federal restrictions, see <https://www.gao.gov/products/T-GGD-91-70>

Does state law restrict me from lobbying?*

There are no state laws that restrict public employees from lobbying, but there are state restrictions on political campaigns and ballot initiatives. For more information, see Restrictions on Political Campaigning by Public Employees – ORS 260.432 <https://sos.oregon.gov/elections/Documents/restrictions.pdf>

Does local law restrict me from lobbying?*

Local jurisdiction restrictions vary about engaging with legislators. Check with your local jurisdiction leadership to learn if you need specific approval to engage with legislators.

Don't I need to register as a lobbyist?

In Oregon, every person, including public employees, must only register as a lobbyist if they lobby more than 24 hours or spend more than \$100 on a lobbying activity in a quarter calendar. For more information, see <https://www.oregon.gov/OGEC/docs/Lobby/Lobby%20Guides/Lobby%20Guide%202010.pdf>



For more information please contact Morgan Cowling, Executive Director
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What can I do if I am prevented from direct lobbying?

If you can't "lobby" you can provide education. Education is impartial (like providing facts about disease rates) and cannot be for the purpose of attempting to influence legislation or opinions. For more examples of the differences between lobbying and education, see the box below.

Type of activity	Education Example	Lobbying Example
Meeting	Meeting with a representative to educate them about how public health funding is used.	Meeting with a representative to urge them to vote for a bill to provide funding for your health department.
Preparing materials	Creating a one pager showing specific activities in your health department.	Creating a one pager urging funding for specific activities in your health department.
Social media	Tweeting vaccination reminders.	Tweeting an opinion on vaccination legislation.

*Always check with your local jurisdiction's restrictions about lobbying.



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