

## **Suggested Talking Points to Support HR 2046 and HR 2610**

- \* Technology has progressed to effectively combat problem gambling and ensure that players are of legal age.
- \* Billions in potential tax revenue from online poker are being lost under the UIGEA.
- \* Appropriate federal regulation can ensure that minors are kept out of sites, services are provided to problem gamblers and the proper taxes are collected. The current system does nothing to protect children, problem gamblers and it is allowing billions in tax revenue to go overseas.
- \* Prohibitions don't work. The UIGEA effectively bans online poker in the U.S. and drives those players underground. Meanwhile, poker continues to grow in popularity nationwide.
- \* If Congress allows me to bet on horses and state lotteries online, why can't I play a skill game like poker with other consenting adults?
- \* Please co-sponsor and support HR 2046 "Internet Gambling Regulation and Enforcement Act" and HR 2610 "Skill Game Protection Act"

## **Visiting Your Member of Congress**

One of the most effective ways to influence your legislator is to make a personal visit. A direct conversation--whether with your legislators or their staff--enables you to establish a real relationship. You can share your concerns directly, ask questions about important policy issues, and hear what your legislator has to say. Understanding why a legislator holds a particular position opens the door for education.

### **No time to go to Washington DC?**

Capitol Hill is not the only place where you may meet with your legislator. All members of Congress have offices in their home state or district. Constituent visits to the home offices are valued. They will be reported to the Washington office and will help raise the visibility of the issues you discuss in both offices. Summer recess (August) and other, shorter recess periods are great times to try meeting directly with your legislator. See [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) or [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) for schedules.

## **How to Schedule a Meeting With Your Member of Congress**

To help increase the chance that you will get a meeting:

1. Call your senators' and representative's local office(s). Ask for the scheduler's name and his or her fax number. Even if you know someone else in the office, get the name of the scheduler as well (they may be in Washington, DC, or in your state) and how to contact him or her.

2. Put together a written request for a meeting with the senator or representative. Nearly all verbal requests are rejected. Send the written request to the scheduler and copy anyone else you know in the office (the original must go to the scheduler). The request should be less than a page long and should include

- Who is in your delegation, with their titles or affiliations
- What you want: a 30-minute meeting with the senator/representative
- When you want to meet: specify the days and times your delegation can meet
- Where you want to meet: give the location of the district office closest to you
- Why you want to meet: to talk about poker legislation

Tip: Check the [PPA website](#) for your members' contact information, as well as background information, committee assignments, and voting records.

3. Send in the written request as soon as you can, even if you don't have the full delegation.

4. Follow up with a phone call to the scheduler one day after you send in the written request. Don't ask if they have an answer; just ask if they received the request.

5. Follow up again two to three days later to see if there is an answer.

## **Preparing for a Lobby Visit**

### **Who can lobby?**

Almost anyone can be an effective lobbyist. An advanced degree in government or public policy is not needed. Your concerns, expressed simply and sincerely, can be very persuasive. Above all, what counts is being a constituent with a vote.

### **Choose your issue**

Pick the legislative concern that is most important to you. You will have a more effective conversation with your legislator or staffer if the team focuses on a single issue rather than discussing a broad legislative agenda.

### **Choose your team**

Assemble a small group that represents the diversity of your community and is interested and knowledgeable about your issue. A group can demonstrate the breadth of support for your position. Just be sure to keep the group small, three to four members, to have an effective visit.

### **Schedule an appointment**

Find out more about scheduling a lobby visit from our scheduling how-to. You can also go to the [PPA](#) to find the contact information you need. You can also call the Capitol switchboard at 202-224-3121 or check the government pages of your phone book.

### **Do your research**

Review the legislator's voting record, committee assignments, and any views that have been publicly stated. Check your legislator's web site: [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) and [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov).

### **Establish a message and goal**

Be specific about the desired action: vote for or against a pending bill or amendment; sponsor a bill; insert an article into the "Congressional Record," or raise a specific concern.

### **Choose roles**

Meet with your team members ahead of time to discuss your approach to the issue. Then designate someone to lead the discussion in your lobby meeting and another to take notes. Decide who will handle which points so you cover everything from the introductions to the political issues. Discuss which angles will be most effective with this member. Look at their voting record, their committee assignments, even their personal background (pre-Congress profession or activities, religious faith, area of education).

## **Holding the Meeting**

Be on time to the meeting. Be positive, constructive, friendly, and brief. Relax. Remember that you have an advantage in this meeting. You prepared on one issue, while your legislator or staffer must handle dozens of issues daily, and you are a constituent with a vote come election time.

### **How to start**

You should each introduce yourselves and mention where you live and a brief reason for your involvement in the issue. Also add if you are representing any organizations and how many members those groups have to show the reach of your small lobby team. Then express appreciation for anything (big or small) you can find in the public record. A "thank you" helps establish a cordial meeting.

### **Discussing your issue**

Clearly articulate the purpose of your visit. Be concise when you present your position. Ask questions about it. Allow plenty of opportunity for listening to your legislator's views and concerns. Listen closely to what your legislator says -- there may be hints that will enable you to follow up with resources. And, even if your legislator is not won over to your position on this issue, she or he might be supportive on another issue.

It is a good idea to leave printed material that summarizes the points you made or provides additional background information on your concern. PPA provides materials on our issues on the web site or by mail.

### **You don't need to know everything**

Many people are put off by the idea of a lobby visit because they do not feel sufficiently expert on a given issue. So long as you have the basics down, simply be honest when there is something you do not know, and offer to send the information after the meeting. [PPA's web site](#) and staff can help you find what you need.

### **Ask for a specific action**

Discussing an issue is important, but the goal is action. Be ready with a concrete request. Some examples: "Senator, will you vote for this bill?"; "Will you make a floor speech against this legislation?" or (to a congressional staff member) "We would like your boss to co-sponsor this bill."

### **Promise to follow-up**

Say when and how you will be in touch to follow-up your request. (Example: "I will call your staff next week to follow up.")

## **After the Meeting**

As soon as possible after the meeting, ideally immediately, your lobby team should spend time debriefing. Take notes to help with future work with your legislator. Follow-up with a thank you letter, recapping your key points, adding any additional information. Plan other ways to work with this office on your issue, such as generating letters and calls from other constituents.

### **Help strengthen PPA's work**

We encourage you to send a brief report on your meeting to PPA. Knowing how your legislator responded during your visit can help us in our work on Capitol Hill.

### **An Alternative: Hold a Public Event**

Organize a local event focusing on an issue of concern during a recess and invite your members of Congress to speak. A delegation representing a broad and diverse local constituency or the promise of a large audience will help get you on your busy member's schedule. Leave plenty of lead time to organize such an event. If it is legal to hold charity poker events in your local area, it is a good opportunity to invite them.

## **Review: Tips for a Successful Lobby Visit**

Meeting with your members of Congress or their staff and developing a personal relationship are the most effective ways to influence the legislators' positions on an issue.

Phone calls, faxes, emails, and letters are all important but are not as effective as meeting with your members of Congress or their staff.

### **1. Make an appointment.**

Schedule the lobby visit in advance; don't just show up. A broad-based delegation of constituents (five is ideal) increases the likelihood of getting a meeting with the legislator rather than his or her staff. Fax the scheduler with your written meeting request (who, where, when, and why), and follow up with a phone call. Many offices ignore a request for meeting with their member of Congress if it's not made in writing. Use the PPA letterhead when faxing the request and mention that you will put a picture of your legislator meeting with you on your group's website. If your lobby visit is in Washington, DC, you should ask to meet with at least a legislative assistant.

### **2. Prepare for the lobby visit.**

Information on your legislator's co-sponsorship of bills and previous votes is available at the PPA web site (click [here](#) and then enter your zip code). You can also find valuable personal information about your legislator on his or her home page (click [here](#) to find their web site). Have a face-to-face pre-meeting with your delegation to determine who will cover which points and who is going to "chair" the meeting to keep it on topic.

### **3. Be punctual and positive.**

Be on time, and thank the staff person for his or her time. Even if you disagree on most issues, compliment the member of Congress for a vote or action you appreciated. Building rapport with staff is important in developing a long-term relationship.

### **4. Focus the meeting.**

Briefly introduce the individuals of the group, the organizations you represent, and the topic you wish to discuss. It is important to talk about only one issue and to stay on this topic. Remember, you don't have to be an expert on an issue; members of Congress meet with you because you elect them.

### **5. Listen and gather information.**

Ask for your legislator's view on an issue. Be patient and passionate; don't react angrily if you don't get the response you want. Remain polite.

### **6. Make a specific request.**

Rather than something generic like "I want you to support poker," a more effective "ask" is to request support for a specific bill or legislative action: "I would like Congressman Doe to support H.R. XXXX for a poker carveout." Give several brief points why your

member of Congress should support this legislation. Avoid a long philosophical debate about the issue; be concrete.

### **7. Follow up.**

Tell the staff person you will get back to him or her if you can't provide information about an issue on the spot. If the staff person is unfamiliar with a bill or is unsure of the legislator's position, ask for follow-up correspondence. Leave one or two pages of relevant material.

### **8. Express your thanks.**

At the end of the meeting, thank the staff person for his or her time. Send a thank you letter to the staff person soon after your visit, repeating your "ask." This letter helps to build a relationship over time with a member of Congress and her or his staff.

It often takes several meetings with a member of Congress or his or her staff to influence legislative action. A lobby visit is important to establish a relationship with a congressional office and to get congressional attention on an issue, but make sure to follow up with phone calls, faxes, emails, and letters to the editor.



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Knowlegis strives to provide customers with the most sophisticated and user-friendly systems and tools for interacting with elected officials.

The best political education I received was not from a graduate school course or even from working the committee rooms of Capitol Hill during my time as a congressional aide. My best lessons came when I traveled off the Hill to attend my congressman's town hall meetings.

As a press secretary for a suburban Maryland congressman, I worked the legislative issues by day and went to more than 100 town hall meetings at night. It was at places like the VFW Hall in Glen Burnie, Maryland, where I saw firsthand how certain strategies led the congressman to say during the car ride home, "We have to look into that person's issue tomorrow."

A survey by the Congressional Management Foundation showed that raising a question at a town hall meeting is one of the most effective methods for influencing undecided lawmakers. Here are the top 10 strategies for taking advantage of these unique opportunities:

**1. Be Prepared.**

Most people don't approach their Members of Congress with a well-researched, well-rehearsed pitch. Constituents who come to town hall meetings with thoughtful arguments, good data, and persuasive stories always get remembered.

**2. Tell a Personal Story.**

Members of Congress are always looking for firsthand accounts of the impact that policies have on their constituents. Think in advance of how a policy might affect you or your family, business, or community.

**3. Use Numbers If You Have Them.**

Politicians live for one thing: 50 percent plus 1. This keeps them re-elected and employed. Use numbers by mentioning things like, "I have 50 employees," "I represent 100 people in my union," or "There are 500 people in my community affected by this bill."

**4. Be Respectful.**

Some constituents start a conversation with, "I pay your salary so you better listen to me." It doesn't matter if you're talking to your grocer or a public

official – starting any conversation with another person in a rude manner is not a very tactful way to persuade them.

**5. Go in Groups.**

Nothing says “listen to me” to a public official like an angry mob. This is not to suggest that you should bring pitch forks and torches to your next town hall meeting, but a chorus is better than a solo performance.

**6. Talk to Staff.**

Every Member brings staff to town hall meetings. Tell them your story before the meeting (also ask a public question during the meeting) and get their business cards.

**7. Leave Paper.**

Any documents passed to state-based staff will likely be faxed to the legislative assistant in Washington who covers your issue.

**8. Follow Up Politely.**

Politely persistent people are more likely to persuade politicians. Congressional offices are often overworked, so an elected official often responds to an individual who just follows up with a phone call a few weeks after attending a meeting.

**9. Get Your People to Multiple Meetings.**

When we heard the same obscure question in Crofton as we heard in Annapolis, my Member of Congress said, “We’d better look into that.” Hearing the same thing in different places signals to a politician that there may be a deeper problem afoot.

**10. Demonstrate That You’re Not Going Away.**

If you continue to show your presence at town hall meetings, the legislator must deal with you, even if it’s only to avoid an uncomfortable encounter at a future town hall meeting.

*Brad Fitch is the CEO of Knowlegis, Capitol Advantage’s sister company. Knowlegis is the only company in Washington that provides its customers with a list of upcoming congressional town hall meetings. For more information, call Knowlegis at 703.289.9816.*