**I. The Problem**: Tell them why you want to get big private money out of politics – why *you*care – make it personal! Examples:

* Campaigns are more expensive every year – most regular people can’t run for office.
* Creates cynicism that politics & politicians are corrupt.
* Decreasing voter turnout in elections – threat to democracy.
* Blocks reforms (be specific) I agree with e.g. student debt, environment, civil rights etc.
* Politicians spend time with big donors raising money, rather than talking to constituents or solving problems.
* Special interests control politics; I have no voice.

**II. The Solution:**To lessen the influence of big money create public campaign finance laws.

* Voluntary system
* Matches small dollar donations from constituents
* Requires debates
* Enforces contribution limits
* Already existing in New York City, Seattle WA, Maine, Connecticut, Arizona
* More diverse candidates (especially women, middle class people, people of color)
* More ideas presented for voters to choose among.
* More grassroots campaigns – get to know constituents.

**III. The Ask/Action:**We need you to support legislation for public campaign financing.

* Vote for Congressional Bills: Government by the People Act (House); Fair Elections Now (Senate)
* Encourage your colleagues to support the legislation
* Explain to your constituents why public financing deepens democracy

**IV.  Follow Up: Don’t let them forget you!**

* Write a note thanking for the meeting/ repeating your asks
* Write an article for your school paper about the visit; send it with a note repeating your ask.
* Collect signatures on a petition with your ask and get lots students to sign on; send it with a note repeating your ask.
* Hold a rally outside his/her office repeating your ask!
* Make a follow-up appointment with even more students.

**MORE TIPS FOR LOBBYING**

**Plan how the meeting will run and who will speak from your group.**Find out how long the meeting will be when you make the appointment. Then agree among yourselves what you would like to ask the legislator, tell her/him, and what action you want him/her to take. Designate someone from your group in advance to facilitate the meeting.

**The facilitator should begin by having everyone in the group to introduce themselves.**Use the introductions to legitimize your group and your reasons for being there (e.g., “I am Democracy Matters chapter member from Jones College “; “I worked on your campaign”; Emphasize that you are representing a larger group of students.

**Don’t be disappointed if your appointment is set up with a staff person.**Legislators are busy and staff members pass the information they receive on to their bosses.  By developing a rapport with a staff member, you open an important line of communication.

**Present a clear and concise message/include facts.**Get your points across in the fewest possible words. Have each person take part of the argument to present.  If your issue involves legislation, cite the specific bill’s name or number. Make it personal – say why you care. Don’t be afraid to be passionate!!

**Don’t ramble – stick to the subject.**Be specific about what it is you hope to accomplish in the meeting.

**Use hard facts to support your arguments.**Give the legislator a handout with some information, data or support from newspapers.

**Refrain from overstatement; honesty builds credibility.**Don’t exaggerate. Never lie.

**After your initial pitch, ask specific questions, and allow them to respond.**Ask if they will support your work by introducing a bill, voting for a bill, supporting your position, working to convince other legislators. If not, ask them for suggestions that would allow them to support your issues.

**Be prepared for questions, even challenges.**Be sure to think through the criticisms of your position and have answers ready.

**If you don’t know something, say so.**If a question throws you off balance, say you will research the matter and report back.

**Bring only a small number of people to each appointment.**Between 4 and 6 is ideal  – enough to show you have support, few enough so the legislator doesn’t feel overwhelmed (but this can work with fewer people as well).

**Be knowledgeable.** Know with whom you are speaking, know your issue, and the politicians’ stand on it.

**Be patient**.  
It is not uncommon for an elected official to be late, or to have a meeting interrupted. Be flexible.

**Be a good listener…**Give the legislator or staff member a chance to BRIEFLY express his/her point of view. **…BUT don’t allow your legislator to evade the issue.**Don’t be afraid to firmly but tactfully bring the conversation back to your point. Ask *specific* questions. Don’t let them dominate the conversation orinterrupt you!

**Treat the representative with the same dignity and respect you expect for yourself.** Don’t threaten, offer rewards, or call names. Be polite.

**Don’t back legislators into a corner.**Lobbying is like any negotiation: both sides should leave without feeling like they lost. Keep the door open for further discussion .

**Thank you and hand out materials.**Thank them for their time, give them materials to read (petitions etc), tell them you will be in touch with them in the future. Include your contact information on each document.

**Follow Up.**Follow up with a letter to the legislator by thanking him/her for meeting with you. Repeat the details of the meeting and any specific commitments or outcomes. If you agreed to send any further information, include it with your letter.