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**All Together for Public Services**  
**Tuesday 19 October 2010**  
**Rally and Lobby of Parliament**

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## **How to lobby your MP**

### **What is lobbying?**

As part of the TUC's All Together for Public Services campaign we want Government MPs to hear directly from their constituents that the cuts in spending will hit vital services, threaten the social fabric and increase inequality.

The best way to deliver this message is through joint delegations of union members and those who rely on the services that we deliver or others who will be directly affected by the cuts.

Every MP should recognise that their constituents have a right to lobby them whether or not you voted for them. You can lobby your MP either in Parliament or at the constituency surgery which most MPs will organise on a regular basis. If they don't have regular surgeries, they will usually list a phone number on their website where you can make an appointment to see them.

It's more important that coalition MPs hear a strong message from their constituents than whether this takes place at Westminster on October 19<sup>th</sup> or in your constituency.

The aim of our campaign is to persuade Government MPs that the cuts they plan are too fast, too deep and unfair in their impact. This means that this is a continuing campaign – not just a one off lobby event. The message needs to get through that their constituents are deeply concerned about the impact of the cuts and want the Government to change course. It may be unrealistic to expect an MP to announce a complete change in their views after a single meeting, but the more they get the message that their constituents are opposed to the cuts the more worried they will be.

There is much more about our message for MPs at [www.tuc.org.uk/alltogether](http://www.tuc.org.uk/alltogether)

You should therefore use a meeting with your MP to:

- make sure they understand the impact of the cuts in their constituency and how unpopular they are
- find out their views on the key issues in the cuts debate. There is a checklist and briefing available in the briefing for lobbyists available at

[www.tuc.org.uk/alltogether](http://www.tuc.org.uk/alltogether)

### **Meeting your MP**

In theory you can turn up at Westminster any time that the House of Commons is sitting and request a meeting with your MP. But there is no guarantee that they will be there or have time to meet you. (There are many legitimate calls on an MP's time both within Westminster and outside.) In these days of heightened security, there is a strict limit on numbers within Parliament.

Particularly when you are joining a lobby such as this, you should do everything you can to arrange to meet in advance.

### **Arrangements in advance**

The best way to contact your MP is to write to him or her at the House of Commons, Westminster, London, SW1A 0AA. Most MPs also use email, and should treat emails in the same manner as a letter. You can find out your MP's email address at the following website:

[www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk)

and following the links to MPs and Lords and then find your MP

MPs have had a letter from the TUC about the lobby, so should be aware of the event. So keep your letter simple and polite, perhaps just stating that you will be coming, the size of your group and asking for a meeting. It is always useful to make it clear in the letter that you are a constituent of the MP.

It is also worth giving your MP your mobile number, if you have one. This may help them track you down on the day.

Because of the pressure on the Central Lobby – the area in the House of Commons where visitors traditionally wait for MPs – there is a limit of 100 lobbyists.

It is therefore a good idea to suggest to your MP that you meet elsewhere. They may suggest that you meet outside the main Palace of Westminster in one of the other office buildings for MPs around Westminster. Portcullis House may be a popular choice for this as it has communal areas where it is easy to meet and has efficient security procedures.

We have also booked two large Committee Rooms in the House of Commons part of the main Palace of Westminster, where you can suggest that you meet your MP. The rooms are Committee Rooms 9 and 10, though as room bookings are sometimes changed at the last minute, you need to know that they are booked in the names of Frank Doran MP and Tony Lloyd MP for the afternoon.

If you are meeting your MP in the Central Lobby or elsewhere in the Palace of Westminster, you will enter through a ramped entrance to the left of the St

Stephens entrance to the Commons. Any TUC steward or policeman will tell you where this is.

After clearing the security search point you will be routed through Westminster Hall and then up a staircase and along a corridor to Central Lobby. Stewards will be available to help you. Before you queue for the security check, inform a police officer if you have a meeting arranged with your MP and show them any correspondence to this effect if your MP has sent it to you. This should allow you to go straight into the security checking area without queuing with the general public for tours of Parliament. Your MP or their staff will usually come to meet you in Central Lobby. You need to go to the desk in Central Lobby and ask the attendants to telephone your MP's office.

Remember you will have to go through 'airport type' security to gain access to Parliament – on a busy day this can take at least 15 minutes – and you may need to queue until there is space. Please note that you cannot take large bags into the Palace, and ideally you should take as little as possible in with you as this will speed up the process. We will arrange cloakroom facilities in Westminster Central Hall where the rally is taking place where you can leave large bags, though ideally please don't bring them. No banners or posters are allowed into the Palace and our stewards will collect them from you on entry.

### **What if you don't have an arranged meeting?**

If your MP has agreed to meet you, but not given you any details of where and when, or if you have not already arranged a meeting with your MP, you will need to queue outside the new entrance next to St Stephen's.

The police will only allow 100 people, including lobbyists and other visitors, into Central Lobby at any one time. Pass through the security check and proceed to Central Lobby in due course. Once in Central Lobby, go to the desk and ask for "a green card", which is a request for your MP to come and meet you. This should be filled in and returned as directed. It is important that on the card you make a clear statement as to your reason for visiting such as "to discuss the impact of public spending cuts on services (be more specific if you want to talk about one issue in particular) in (the relevant constituency)".

This is very important because, if you do not manage to meet with your MP, the card will then be sent on to him or her. The MP should then respond directly to you in due course - clearly the more he or she knows about why you were at Westminster the better.

The desk staff will take the card and officials will be asked to look for your MP and let him or her know that you are asking to meet with them. While you should wait around for a while, do not forget that lobbyists with firm commitments to meet

their MP will be waiting to get in so you should be prepared to give up waiting after 20 minutes or so.

### **Disabled access**

If you are disabled, telephone the Serjeant-at-Arms' office at the House of Commons, who will advise you procedures for entering the building (phone 0207 219 3000 and ask the switchboard officer to put you through to the Serjeant's office), The Serjeant's office do allow some parking where it is required by disabled people, but individuals will need to verify this with the office. It is usual for one of your MPs' staff to accompany you once you enter the building. You will need to arrange this with your MP in advance. Please notify your union if you have any special ambulatory needs or require any assistance.

### **Meeting with your MP**

It is best to be as brief, clear and courteous as possible. In particular have in mind what you actually wish to say to your MP and what questions you want to ask. If they send their researcher instead, treat them in the same way.

You should thank him or her for taking the time to see you, establish how much time they have, have your arguments ready and most importantly ask them to explain their views Being good at dodging questions is part of every politician's skill set. While there is no need to turn into Jeremy Paxman, you should be prepared to press if necessary.