

WWF Lobby Day 2021
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR LOBBY DAY ACTIVISTS

What is our overarching goal for Lobby Day?

To convince Members of Congress to significantly increase the amount of funding that the U.S. government provides for international conservation programs.

How has the U.S. government supported international conservation to date?

The U.S. government has long been a leader in international conservation. The U.S. government has passed laws and created programs that are designed to support international conservation efforts. The U.S. government has also used its leadership role internationally to encourage other countries to cooperate on efforts to conserve biodiversity and to reduce threats to wildlife and wild places.

Multiple U.S. federal agencies provide technical support and funding for the conservation of species, habitats and natural resources around the world. For instance:

- The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) funds international conservation through its biodiversity and forestry programs. These programs help protect some of the world's largest and most at-risk natural landscapes and seascapes, as well as the livelihoods of millions of people who directly depend on the resources they provide for survival and economic growth.
- The Department of State supports international organizations and treaties that protect the environment and engages in diplomatic efforts to encourage cooperation between countries on global conservation
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) supports international programs to conserve wildlife around the world by protecting habitat, preventing poaching, and helping countries monitor and manage their wildlife populations.
- A range of agencies, including USAID, State and USFWS, work together on programs to combat illegal wildlife trafficking and the illegal trade in timber and fish.
- The U.S. Forest Service supports programs that help countries protect their forests.
- The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) supports programs that promote conservation of marine resources around the world, including efforts to improve fishing practices and prevent illegal seafood products from entering the U.S.
- The U.S. government also provides significant funding to an important international agency called the Global Environment Facility (GEF), which is one of the world's biggest funders of efforts to protect global biodiversity and prevent environmental degradation.

What role does Congress play in keeping these programs running?

Your Members of Congress are responsible for overseeing three areas crucial to keeping these important programs running:

- 1) **Funding.** It is Congress' job to provide funding for the federal government. Each year, Congress must go through a process called "appropriations", which ultimately sets the funding levels for government agencies and their programs for the coming year, including for international conservation. This process gets underway in February/March each year with Members of Congress identifying which programs they consider priorities and how much money they think those programs should receive. The congressional committees in charge of appropriations then take these requests into account as they set spending levels for individual programs during the spring and early summer. This is why Lobby Day is scheduled in early March; we want Members to hear from you as they are weighing in on these funding decisions and deciding which programs they care most about.
- 2) **Legislation.** Congress can pass laws creating new programs or directing the federal agencies to take actions that benefit international conservation. For example, in 2016, Congress passed the END Wildlife Trafficking Act to help direct the efforts of U.S. agencies in responding to the global poaching crisis. Your face-to-face advocacy for these issues can make a real difference in influencing the creation of and support for such legislation.
- 3) **Oversight.** Congress can hold hearings or ask agencies to respond to inquiries related to international conservation issues in order to bring attention to an issue or to motivate federal agencies to take a specific action. Telling your Members of Congress that these issues are important to you provides an incentive for them to exercise stronger oversight of international conservation programs and ensure agencies are making them a priority.

What role do I play in all of this?

Members of Congress are heavily influenced by their constituents—after all, they are elected to represent you, and are accountable to you each and every election day. You have something Members want more than anything – a vote – and that makes your voice the most influential of all. So it is crucially important for Members of Congress to hear from constituents like you who care about conservation. And in particular, it's crucial for them to hear from you that **international conservation** matters to you. Members of Congress hear from voters on a huge number of issues, and when those issues touch on conservation and the environment, they are more often than not about domestic or local concerns. But they may not realize that their voters also care about what the U.S. is doing to protect the environment around the world. If a Member of Congress isn't hearing about international conservation programs from their voters, it makes it easier for them to cut funding for or vote to eliminate international programs altogether. By letting your Members of Congress know you do care and are paying attention, you make it more likely that they will vote to continue U.S. support for these efforts.

What are we asking for?

When meeting with your congressional representatives, it is important to have a clear and concise "ask". This is a specific action that you want them to take. The point of the meeting should be to provide the information and argument that will sway a specific Member of Congress to take the action you want. Remember that one of the strongest arguments you can make is the simple fact that you are a voter in

the Member's state or district and that you care strongly about what they say and how they vote on the issue you are there to discuss.

The following is the "ask" of your Members of Congress that we would like you to advocate for:

- **Significantly increase funding for U.S. international conservation programs.** This includes:
 - Are you willing to support increased funding for these programs?
 - (If "YES") Are you willing to sign Member letters in support of these programs?
 - (If "NO") Do you support at least keeping them at their current funding levels?

What should I do and say during the meeting besides making the "ask"?

The first thing you should do, if you know the office you are meeting at has supported these kinds of programs and funding in the past, is to say "**Thank you**" and acknowledge that past support. The rest of the meeting should be to explain your current ask to your specific Member of Congress or their staff and then to provide the information or arguments that will sway them to take the actions you want to see them take (if they don't immediately say "Yes").

Don't worry; we'll prepare you with specific talking points you can use when meeting with your Members of Congress. We'll also provide you with "leave behind" documents you can give them that more specifically explain the programs and the ask. And beyond the talking points, we encourage you to be yourself! Tell your personal story about why you care about global conservation and what motivated you to lobby on behalf of these programs. The more personal your interaction, the more memorable it will be.

Lastly, keep in mind that at the end of the day, one of the strongest arguments you can make is the simple fact that you are a voter and that you care about what your Members of Congress say and do – and most importantly how they vote – when it comes to this issue.