

**PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT
HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS
DUE FRIDAY, JANUARY 16, 2009**

I. Power Skills

**LOBBYING:
THE ART OF
PERSUASION**

“A president only tells congress what they should do. Lobbyists tell 'em what they will do.”
Will Rogers



How can you convince lawmakers to support your bill? By *lobbying* them—the really fun part of the process. Lobbying lets you roll up your sleeves and try out all of your social action skills.

A *lobbyist* is someone who tries to convince a lawmaker to support or oppose a particular idea. In some states, lobbyists are professionals who are paid for their work. They must officially register with the state. In other states, anyone can lobby by picking up the phone or showing up at the state capitol and chewing the fat with her senator.

The word *lobbyist* comes from the practice of hanging around in the capitol lobby trying to get lawmakers' votes. Much lobbying still occurs outside the senate and house chambers.

As a lobbyist, you can have a lot of power, even if you're "just a kid." That's because you won't always be a kid. Someday you'll be a voter. Lawmakers realize this, and most of them also feel the need to represent the views of all of their constituents, including you.

Should you try lobbying? Only if you have a real problem and a real solution to present. Lawmakers are under a lot of pressure to consider all the *legislation* (laws) and *appropriations* (ways tax money will be spent) that come before them during each legislative session. During session their time is too valuable for you to tie it up simply for a learning experience.

II. Written Assignment

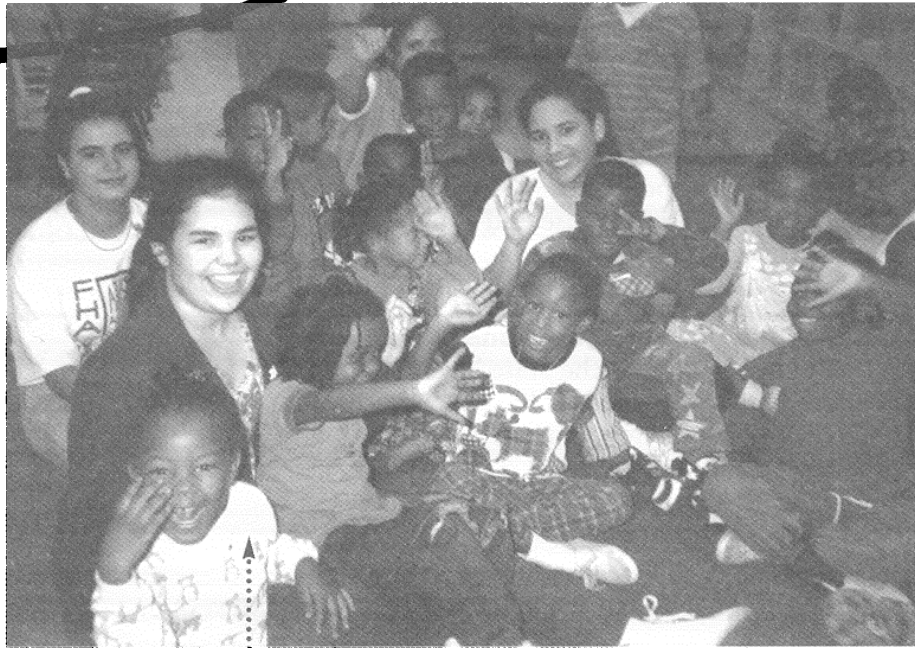
Write a paragraph or two explaining the meaning and origin of the term – *lobby*. Plus, list the things that an activist can do to make a change. Make sure that you use both the reading above and the case study on page two to explain lobbying and give specific examples of what kids can do to make a change.

This assignment should be at least a half page in length.



III. Power Skills in Action – Lobbying

KIDS IN ACTION



Courtesy Dalie Jimenez

Dalie with Head Start kids.

Dalie Jimenez

Miami, Florida. When Dalie Jimenez learned in psychology class that reading to young children helps their brains develop, she wondered about disadvantaged kids. Did their parents have the books or the time to read to them? Did they get enough attention to get a good head start?

And that's exactly where Dalie's wondering landed her—at a Miami Head Start program. (Head Start is a federal program designed to help disadvantaged preschoolers keep pace with other kids their age.) Dalie, then 14, went there to volunteer. Before she went, she told her club, Future Homemakers of America (FHA) Heroes, about her idea, and about 30 of her friends joined her.

"We created a library for the children," Dalie said, "mostly from donated books. We read to the kids and used puppets to act out stories. We baked goodies for them."

A few years later, in 1995, when she heard that Head Start's funding was about to be cut by a third, Dalie knew she had to do something. That huge cut would practically destroy the program. She decided to lobby to restore funding.

Dalie and her friends made 600 paper dolls to send to politicians. They wrote on the dolls: "Don't give up Head Start." She went to the legislative hearing in her state and spoke to the senators, lobbied, and handed out flyers, all aimed at convincing the lawmakers not to allow the huge cut in funding.

Then with the help of FHA, Dalie went to the U.S. Congress to lobby in person. She followed up by writing a letter to the editor of the *Miami Herald*.

Dalie and her friends weren't the only ones who cared. The media publicized the problem in magazines and newspapers. Such efforts started a chain reaction of protest against cutting funding.

The result of all this combined outrage? The lawmakers did *not* cut the funding and the program was saved. When Dalie heard the good news, she hugged her FHA friends. Then she went back to Head Start and hugged her little friends, who reached up, touched her hair, climbed on her lap, and begged for another story, not understanding that this dedicated young volunteer had just helped to shape their future.