

Legislative Advocacy

Strategies That Work

Extremely Effective

1. Personal contact (visit or call) from a constituent who volunteered or contributed to the campaign.
2. Personal contact (visit or call) from anyone who volunteered or contributed to the campaign.
3. Appearing at a local constituent meeting in a group to raise an issue

Very Effective

1. Personal visit from a constituent or public testimony from a constituent.
2. Public testimony from an expert who is not a constituent.
3. Guest opinion in their local paper or a news event drawing attention to the issue in the local media.

Effective

1. Letter-to-the editor in their local newspaper.
2. Personal phone call with a constituent.
3. Personal letter from a constituent.
4. Emails from a constituent.
5. Blogging or commenting on news article that references a target legislator or your policy issue.

Worth Trying

1. Phone message or voice mail from a constituent.
2. Personal phone call with a non-constituent.
3. Phone message/voice mail from a non-constituent.
4. Emails to legislators from a non-constituent.

Legislative Advocacy

Ten Rules of Advocacy

1. Do your homework

- a. Know the issue – be able to explain the effects on constituents. Know the strengths and weaknesses of the opponents arguments. Anticipate questions and have answers ready.
- b. Know the legislator – know their background, interest areas, voting record, and public statements.
- c. Know the staff – often overlooked, they are key. They have time to understand and absorb the facts, they are trusted by the legislator, and can be an advocate for your issue.

2. Start early

- a. Be ready when the time comes and everything takes longer than you think it will.
- b. Develop your strategy early with allies.

3. Tell the truth

- a. Legislators rely on you for good information. You will never regain your credibility if you lose it.
- b. If you don't know the answer, say so. If you promise to find an answer or information, do it.

4. Keep it simple

- a. Work on the KISS principle – (Keep it Simple and Short). Prepare for THREE minutes.
- b. Think about what you want and why you want it.
- c. Legislators are busy and appreciate concise summaries of what you want.
- d. Legislators EXPECT you to make an ask or have a point of view.

5. Take your friends where you find them

- a. Find your allies and work with them – a friend is someone who helps you when you need it.
- b. NEVER count anyone in; never count anyone out. Your opponent today may be your ally tomorrow.

6. Know your legislative opponents

- a. Don't waste time trying to convince those who are publicly committed to their positions.
- b. Put your energy into swaying undecided votes.
- c. Keep lines of communication with your legislative opponents open for possible compromises.

7. Think BIG, but know your bottom line

- a. ALWAYS ask for more than you think you can get.
- b. The legislative process is one of compromise – legislators try to give everyone something.
- c. Have something you can give up to your opponent.

8. Build coalitions

- a. Work form a united front. Find groups who agree with you on an issue and work with them.
- b. Don't expect them to agree with you on every issue or expect that the coalition will last forever.
- c. It doesn't matter who gets the credit as long as it gets done. Grabbing credit is divisive and gives your opponents something to exploit. (Don't air your dirty laundry.)

9. Work at the local level

- a. Legislators pay most attention to their constituents.
- b. Legislators are attentive to LOCAL media/locally elected officials/key opinion leaders and allies.

10. Thank people that help

- a. Everybody likes a pat on the back – regardless of outcome.
- b. Solicit advice from various legislators/groups about how to move forward.