

Connecting With Elected Officials



Support

- Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services: Office of Agriculture Water Policy



The need for Districts to connect with Public Officials

- Funding
- Education
- Influence specific Legislation affecting your district.
- Building long-term relationships



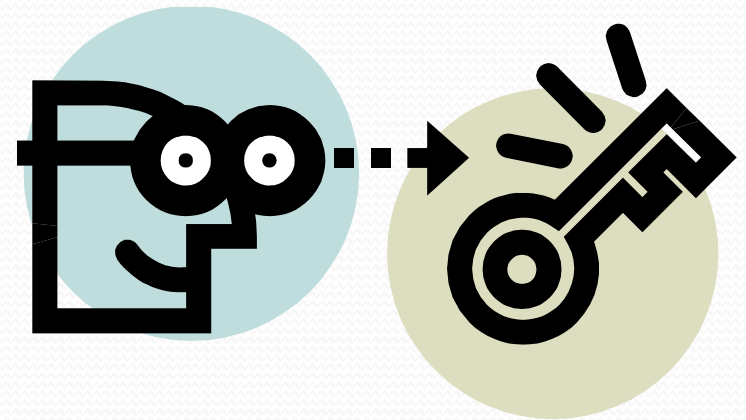
Agenda

- Understanding Elected Officials
- What is Lobbying?
- Develop a Strategy
- Whom will your lobby?
- Be convincing, humble
- Make it easy
- Making Your Case
- Honor Staff
- Meeting 101
- Don'ts
- Follow up and Follow up



Understanding Elected Officials

- They should always be respected
- They have a lot to do and not a lot of time
- Relationships are important
- Trust is their primary currency
- Yes, they want to be re-elected



What is lobbying?

- Influencing, or attempting to influence, legislative action through oral or written communication with legislative officials.
- Soliciting others to influence or attempt to influence legislative action.
- Attempting to obtain the good will of legislative officials.



Develop a strategy

- Target specific officials on the governing body
- Know their position on your topic
- Know the politics
- Do a self assessment



Whom will you Lobby?

- Friends
- Persuadables
- Opponents
- Leadership



IT IS ONE THING TO CONVINCING PEOPLE YOU ARE SMART. IT IS ANOTHER TO CONVINCING PEOPLE YOU ARE RIGHT.

- Sometimes you are judged on whether you are bright. As a lobbyist, you are judged on whether people think you are right.
- Consider yourself a salesperson. You are selling your client's interest. Who is your audience?



Make it easy-

- If you want a member to propose legislation, draft it
- If you want a member to write a letter or give a speech on your behalf, draft it
- Give press releases to reporters



BUILD UPON YOUR CIRCLE OF FRIENDS

How does one build one's rolodex?

- Contact your friends in the area;
- If someone has assisted you, follow up:
 - Invite them to appropriate functions;
 - Take them to lunch;
 - Send holiday cards.



Honor the hard-working staff, for they prepare the position papers for the members.

- Call someone you normally wouldn't once a week, just to keep in touch.
- Unless you want to be known as a partisan, don't neglect those that are in the minority.



Honor the hard-working staff,
for they prepare the position
papers for the members.

- Staff often carries a big stick.
- Staff is almost always overworked and underpaid.
- A little kindness goes a long way.



Be humble in victory, for your
bill may yet be vetoed.

- “ “The most practical kind of politics is the politics of decency.”

Vice President Theodore Roosevelt,
remarks to Harvard Undergraduates 1901.



Making Your Case

- Appeal to their self-interests by explaining how your issue will affect our constituents in ways they should be concerned about
- Never forget the straight out appeal to reason and common sense
- Appeal to ideology as it might be useful to frame your issue in terms I aspire to uphold





Meeting 101

- Don't assume your public official know what you are talking about
 - Sometimes Public officials often won't tell if they don't
 - If they do know the issue, then be brief and tell us something new we may not be aware of
- Ask direct questions and wait for an answer
 - Even if it means sitting through a silence
 - If they don't answer, rephrase the question
 - If they are unwilling to answer, ask why
- Ask for a demonstration of support
 - Don't let them get away with just agreeing with you
 - Make sure they commit to taking a specific action
- If you get a "No", understand what it means





Don'ts

- Never lie
 - Be scrupulous with facts (no matter how small)
 - Your credibility is shot as soon as you say something an official knows is not true
- Never make a threat
 - You should hold the officials accountable for the official's actions
 - However it won't help your cause to threaten that they will never win re-election, for example
- Don't make it personal, or take it personally
 - Always be professional as it is expected of your organization
 - It's okay to be passionate, but there is a line



Follow Up and Follow Up

- If they are noncommittal, or if you think we can be swayed to support your position, continue to apply pressure
- If they give a commitment of support, send a letter/email confirming your understanding of what was agreed to
- Stay in touch by phone/email until action is taken by vote or a completed activity
- Sometimes commitments get broken...you want to be among the first to know
- No matter what the outcome, send a thank you note



Questions

