



## HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH LEGISLATORS

### IMPACTING POLICY

by INFLUENCING  
business GROWTH  
through ADVOCACY



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## **COMMUNICATING WITH LAWMAKERS**

IT IS ESSENTIAL FOR EVERY GRASSROOTS NETWORK MEMBER TO MAINTAIN PERIODIC CONTACT WITH MEMBERS OF CONGRESS OR THEIR STAFFERS. THERE ARE MANY POSSIBLE COMMUNICATION OPTIONS, SUCH AS LETTERS, PHONE CALLS AND FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS. SOME PEOPLE ARE UNCOMFORTABLE SPEAKING THEIR MINDS TO SOMEONE OF SUCH IMPORTANCE, AND THEY ARE NOT ALONE. SURVEYS SHOWS 90% OF AMERICAN ADULTS HAVE NEVER WRITTEN A LETTER TO A MEMBER OF CONGRESS. THIS SECTION IS A GUIDE FOR COMMUNICATION CLEARLY AND PROPERLY FOR BEST RESULTS.

COMMUNICATION IS A BASIC KEY IN A GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATION, AND THE WAY CONSTITUENTS COMMUNICATE IS JUST AS IMPORTANT AS WHAT THEY COMMUNICATE.

## LETTERS AND EMAILS

LETTER WRITING HAS FOR DECADES BEEN AN EFFECTIVE WAY TO GET A POINT ACROSS TO A MEMBER OF CONGRESS BECAUSE A LETTER LETS YOU FULLY EXPLAIN YOUR VIEWS AND CONCERNS TO YOUR LAWMAKER. A LETTER IS ALSO THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO ASK A MEMBER OF CONGRESS TO INTRODUCE, COSPONSOR, SUPPORT OR OPPOSE SPECIFIC LEGISLATION.

LETTER WRITING, IS, FOR NOW, HOWEVER, THE WORST WAY TO REACH MEMBERS OF CONGRESS. MASS DISTRIBUTION THROUGH THE HOUSE AND SENATE POST OFFICES IS CURRENTLY BANNED, AND THE SYSTEMS FOR SANITIZING MAIL ARE ARDUOUS. THE TIME IT TAKES FOR A LETTER TO ARRIVE ON CAPITOL HILL MAY BE A FEW DAYS OR SEVERAL WEEKS, AND THEY OFTEN ARRIVE WITH AN UNFLATTERING ODOR AND TEXTURE THAT HARDLY ENCOURAGES HANDLING OR RETENTION.

INSTEAD OF LETTERS, SEND THE SAME INFORMATION BY EMAIL - THE DELIVERY METHOD HILL OFFICES PREFER.

LETTERS MUST BE WRITTEN CORRECTLY. LONG-WINDED LETTERS ARE RARELY READ. MANY CONGRESSIONAL OFFICES ALSO PAY LESS ATTENTION TO LETTERS THEY RECEIVE DOZENS OF COPIES *OF*, WITH THE ONLY DIFFERENCE BEING THE SIGNATURE AT THE BOTTOM. LETTERS MUST INDICATED CLEARLY WHAT IT IS YOU ARE REQUESTING.

## ADDRESSING

FOR LETTERS SENT TO CONGRESS BY US MAIL, USE A UNIQUE, SIMPLIFIED ADDRESSING METHOD:

HONORABLE SALLY SMITH  
US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515

HONORABLE JOHN DOE  
US SENATE  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

IT IS UNNECESSARY TO PUT A BUILDING NAME OR NUMBER ON THE ADDRESS. BECAUSE MOST CONSTITUENTS FAIL TO KEEP UP-TO-DATE ADDRESSES FOR MEMBERS, WHO MAY MOVE TO NEW OFFICES AT THE BEGINNING OF OR DURING A TWO-YEAR CONGRESSIONAL PERIOD, MAILROOM CLERKS DISREGARD THIS INFORMATION EVEN IF IT IS INCLUDED IN THE ADDRESS.

TO AVOID SEXIST OR AWKWARD LANGUAGE, USE THE FOLLOWING SALUTATION:

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE SMITH:

DEAR SENATOR DOE:

EMAILS ARE BEST SENT DIRECTLY TO THE STAFFER INVOLVED IF YOU HAVE THAT PERSON'S ADDRESS. IF YOU WANT TO SEND AN EMAIL TO A MEMBER OF *CONGRESS*, YOU MUST GO TO THE MEMBER'S WEBSITE (USUALLY UNDER THE "CONTACT US" SECTION) AND SEND A MESSAGE USING A WEB FORM. EMAILS WITHOUT INFORMATION IDENTIFYING THE SENDER AS A CONSTITUENT *ARE*, IN ALMOST EVERY *CASE*, REJECTED BY THE *OFFICE'S* COMPUTER SYSTEM.

### OTHER TIPS:

- IF YOUR ISSUE IS A FEDERAL TAX BILL THAT WILL AFFECT YOUR BUSINESS, YOU SHOULD CONTACT OFFICIALS IN WASHINGTON. HOWEVER, IF IT'S A LOCAL ZONING ISSUE, FEDERAL OFFICIALS WON'T BE ABLE TO HELP YOU.
- ALSO, MAKE SURE THEY WRITE *THEIR* ELECTED OFFICIAL.
- DON'T USE COMPANY LETTERHEAD; A PERSONAL APPROACH IS ALWAYS THE MOST EFFECTIVE.

## PURPOSE AND CONTENT

LETTERS OR EMAILS TO CONGRESS MUST STATE IN THE FIRST PARAGRAPH THE REASON FOR WHICH THEY ARE WRITTEN:

- TO EXPRESS A STANCE ON AN ISSUE AND TO ASK FOR SUPPORT,
- TO CONGRATULATE THEM OR THANK THEM FOR A PARTICULAR VOTE, AND
- TO EXPRESS DISAPPROVAL OF A VOTE (POLITELY).

HERE ARE SOME HELPFUL HINTS TO REMEMBER WHEN WRITING LETTERS OR EMAILS:

- KEEP THEM AS SHORT AND TO THE POINT AS POSSIBLE. ONE-PAGE LETTERS ARE BEST.
- IDENTIFY WHAT THE SUBJECT OF THE LETTER IS AND STATE THE NAME AND NUMBER OF THE BILL (SUCH AS HR100 OR S 99).
- STATE THE REASON FOR WRITING, INCLUDING ANY PERSONAL EXPERIENCES THAT PERTAIN TO THE MATTER.
- BE SURE TO INCLUDE AN "ASK." THE LEGISLATOR WANTS TO KNOW WHAT TYPE OF ACTION YOU ARE REQUESTING. (SUCH AS "I URGE YOU TO VOTE IN FAVOR OF S 99 ..")
- USE FACTS. KNOW YOUR ISSUE. NO ELECTED OFFICIAL CAN BE AN EXPERT ON EVERY ISSUE. THIS IS YOUR OPPORTUNITY TO EDUCATE THEM AND BUILD A RELATIONSHIP BASED ON TRUST.
- AVOID BEING ARGUMENTATIVE.
- NEVER RESORT TO NAME CALLING.
- IF YOU HAVE MET THE MEMBER OF CONGRESS PERSONALLY OR HAVE SOME CONNECTION OVER AND ABOVE THAT OF A CONSTITUENT, DRAW ATTENTION TO IT IN THE LETTER.
- ASK LEGISLATORS TO STATE THEIR POSITIONS ON THE ISSUE BY *WRITTEN* REPLY.
- WRITE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, PREFERABLY WHILE A BILL IS STILL IN COMMITTEE. SENATORS AND REPRESENTATIVES ARE USUALLY MORE RESPONSIVE TO AN APPEAL AT THAT TIME.
- NEVER THREATEN POLITICAL REPUDIATION IF THE MEMBER OF CONGRESS DISAGREES WITH YOUR POSITION.
- AVOID STANDARD PHRASES THAT GIVE THE APPEARANCE OF FORM LETTERS, WHICH HAVE LESS IMPACT THAN MORE PERSONAL ONES.
- ASK FAMILY MEMBERS AND FRIENDS TO ALSO SEND LETTERS.

AFTER WRITING A LETTER, MAIL IT OR EMAIL IT IMMEDIATELY. WHEN A LETTER ARRIVES IS OFTEN JUST AS IMPORTANT AS WHAT A LETTER SAYS.

TO ENSURE THAT YOUR EMAIL GETS PAST THE ELECTRONIC FENCE, LIST YOUR FULL NAME AND ADDRESS-INCLUDING THE AREA CODE BEFORE YOUR PHONE NUMBER AND YOUR ZIP CODE. THIS INFORMATION TELLS THE CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE THAT YOU ARE A CONSTITUENT, INCREASING THE LIKELIHOOD THAT YOUR MESSAGE WILL GET A RESPONSE.

## LETTERS REGARDING REGULATORY MATTERS

ALTHOUGH GRASSROOTS ACTIVITY MAY BE PRIMARILY FOCUSED ON LEGISLATIVE ISSUES, YOU ALSO CAN BE EFFECTIVE IN INFLUENCING THE REGULATORY PROCESS THAT GOVERNS YOUR INDUSTRY OR AGENCY.

GRASSROOTS ADVOCATES CAN HELP BUILD AWARENESS OF AN ISSUE AND CAN HELP DETERMINE VOTES ON REGULATIONS BY WRITING DIRECTLY TO THE REGULATOR OR SUBMITTING FORMAL, WRITTEN COMMENTS DURING THE COMMENT PERIOD SPECIFIED IN THE REGULATORY PROCESS STATUTORY LANGUAGE. THE MOST EFFECTIVE TOOL, HOWEVER, IS OFTEN A LETTER FROM A MEMBER OF CONGRESS TO THE REGULATOR-A LETTER WRITTEN AT THE REQUEST OF A GRASSROOTS ADVOCATE. EVEN MORE INFLUENTIAL ARE MULTIPLE LETTERS FROM DIFFERENT MEMBERS, OR A SINGLE LETTER SIGNED BY MANY MEMBERS-HOUSE, SENATE OR BOTH.

LETTERS FROM MEMBERS CAN ALSO BE HELPFUL IN OBTAINING INFORMATION FROM REGULATORS THAT ARE DISINCLINED TO OFFER SUBSTANTIVE INFORMATION TO INDIVIDUALS. FEW REGULATORS WILL DENY A REQUEST FROM A MEMBER ASKING WHY AN AGENCY MAY BE INVESTIGATING AN ORGANIZATION, RECONSIDERING AN EXISTING PROCESS OR CONSIDERING A NEW PROCESS.

## TELEPHONE CALLS

ANOTHER EFFECTIVE WAY OF COMMUNICATING WITH LEGISLATORS IS THROUGH TELEPHONE CONVERSATIONS. EVERY REPRESENTATIVE AND SENATOR HAS AN OFFICE IN WASHINGTON, AND AT LEAST ON IN THE HOME DISTRICT OR STATE. PHONE CALLS TO A MEMBER'S OFFICE ARE EFFECTIVE EVEN WHEN IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO SPEAK WITH THE MEMBER DIRECTLY.

WHEN CONSTITUENTS CONTACT A MEMBER'S DISTRICT OR STATE OFFICE, THE STAFF MEMBER RELAYS A CONSTITUENT'S VIEWS TO WASHINGTON. SUCH REPORTS ARE MADE DAILY WHEN THERE ARE A LARGE NUMBER OF RESPONSES ON AN ISSUE.

IN CERTAIN SITUATIONS, SUCH AS WHEN A CLOSELY CONTESTED BILL IS CONSIDERED BY THE FULL HOUSE OR SENATE, GRASSROOTS LOBBYISTS MAY NEED TO CONTACT A MEMBER'S WASHINGTON OFFICE DIRECTLY. IF YOU DON'T KNOW THE OFFICE NUMBER, CALL THE CAPITOL SWITCHBOARD (202-224-3121), WHICH CONNECTS ANY CALLER TO THE APPROPRIATE OFFICE (INCLUDING COMMITTEE OFFICES).

MEMBERS OF CONGRESS AND THEIR STAFF ARE VERY BUSY AND CAN RECEIVE HUNDREDS OF PHONE CALLS DAILY WHEN SIGNIFICANT LEGISLATION IS PENDING. BEFORE CALLING, PREPARE NOTES ON THE ISSUE TO BE DISCUSSED. ALWAYS ASK FOR THE MEMBER'S POSITION ON THE ISSUE IN QUESTION.

### OTHER TIPS:

1. UNLESS YOU ARE A PERSONAL FRIEND OF THE LEGISLATOR, IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO SPEAK DIRECTLY WITH HIM OR HER. YOU CAN LEAVE A MESSAGE ABOUT YOUR CONCERNS WITH THE INDIVIDUAL WHO ANSWERS THE PHONE, OR, BETTER YET, WITH THE LEGISLATOR'S STAFF MEMBER WHO HANDLE THE PARTICULAR ISSUE IN QUESTION.

*"I'D LIKE TO TALK TO THE INDIVIDUAL IN YOUR OFFICE WHO HANDLES CHEMICAL SITE SECURITY LEGISLATION..."*

2. TRY NOT TO ARGUE. JUST EXPRESS YOUR OPINIONS. SAY WHY YOU FEEL THE WAY YOU DO, AND STATE WHAT ACTION YOU WANT YOUR LEGISLATOR TO TAKE.

*"I AM AGAINST H.R. 5577 BECAUSE IT WILL COST MY COMPANY IMPORTANT BUSINESS CONTRACTS – SOMETHING WE JUST CANNOT AFFORD. PLEASE LET REPRESENTATIVE SMITH KNOW THAT I URGE HIM TO VOTE NO ON THIS BILL."*

3. SEEK ASSURANCES THAT THE MESSAGE WILL BE TRANSMITTED TO YOUR LEGISLATOR, AND REQUEST A RESPONSE IN WRITING.

*"WOULD YOU PLEASE PASS THIS MESSAGE DIRECTLY TO REPRESENTATIVE SMITH, AND ALSO SEND ME A LETTER ABOUT HIS VIEWS ON THE BILL?"*

4. IT IS VERY IMPORTANT WHEN CALLING A LEGISLATOR'S OFFICE TO GIVE YOUR FULL NAME AND ADDRESS; AND, KEEP YOUR CALL SHORT AND TO THE POINT.

## HOW TO WORK WITH CONGRESSIONAL STAFF

BECAUSE OF THE HECTIC SCHEDULE KEPT BY EVERY MEMBER OF CONGRESS AND THE NUMBER OF ISSUES WITH WHICH THEY MUST BE FAMILIAR, CONSTITUENTS OFTEN MEET WITH LAs. THESE STAFF MEMBERS USUALLY COVER 10-15 MAJOR ISSUES AND SEVERAL MINOR ONES. LAs OFTEN ARE YOUNG (UNDER AGE 30) AND, BECAUSE OF THEIR INEXPERIENCE, MAY HAVE ONLY A PASSING FAMILIARITY WITH SOCMA AND ITS ISSUES. THEREFORE, IT IS CRITICAL TO PROVIDE THESE INDIVIDUALS WITH BACKGROUND INFORMATION PERTAINING TO A BILL, AS WELL AS INFORMATION ON SOCMA'S POSITION ON THE BILL.

DO NOT BE DISAPPOINTED WHEN ASKED TO MEET WITH A STAFF MEMBER INSTEAD OF THE ELECTED OFFICIAL. LAs ARE SOMETIMES MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE ELECTED MEMBER, WHO CANNOT POSSIBLY BE AN EXPERT ON EVERY BILL INTRODUCED IN A PARTICULAR CONGRESS. WHEN A BILL IS UP FOR A VOTE, THE FIRST PERSON A REPRESENTATIVE OR SENATOR ASKS FOR INFORMATION IS THE LA RESPONSIBLE FOR THAT ISSUE. THEREFORE, AN LA'S INFLUENCE AND IMPORTANCE IS CONSIDERABLE. THEY PROVIDE MEMBERS OF CONGRESS WITH REPORTS OF CONSTITUENTS' POSITIONS, HOW ORGANIZED THE INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP WAS, AND THE NUMBER OF CONSTITUENTS WHO EXPRESSED SUPPORT FOR, OR OPPOSITION TO, A PARTICULAR BILL.

### TYPES OF CONGRESSIONAL STAFF

#### *PERSONAL STAFF*

- WORK DIRECTLY FOR THE MEMBER OF CONGRESS SERVING THE CONSTITUENTS REPRESENTED IN THAT DISTRICT.
- THESE ARE THE MOST LIKELY STAFF TO TAKE CONSTITUENT APPOINTMENTS.
- ROUTINELY HANDLE CONSTITUENT INQUIRIES, MEETINGS, AND CASEWORK.

#### *COMMITTEE STAFF*

- WORK FOR A PARTICULAR COMMITTEE (I.E. HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE).
- TYPICALLY EXPERTS IN THE FIELD OF THEIR COMMITTEE'S JURISDICTION.
- THERE IS TYPICALLY SOME COORDINATION BETWEEN COMMITTEE STAFF AND THE PERSONAL STAFF OF THE MEMBERS OF CONGRESS ASSIGNED TO THAT COMMITTEE.
- NOT SPECIFICALLY CHARGED WITH SERVING PARTICULAR CONSTITUENTS OR CITIZENS.

#### *LEADERSHIP STAFF*

- WORK FOR THE LEADERS OF THE HOUSE AND SENATE, MAJORITY LEADERS, WHIPS, AND CONFERENCE AND CAUCUS CHAIRMEN.
- SPECIFICALLY TASKED WITH HELPING THE MEMBER OF THE LEADERSHIP EXECUTE LEADERSHIP DUTIES.

### PERSONAL OFFICE STAFFING STRUCTURE

MEMBERS OF CONGRESS HAVE SIGNIFICANT AUTHORITY TO ORGANIZE THEIR OFFICES IN WHATEVER WAY THEY CHOOSE. THEREFORE, NOT EVERY OFFICE HAS THE SAME NUMBER OF PEOPLE DOING THE SAME JOB OR HANDLING THE SAME SET OF RESPONSIBILITIES. HOWEVER, THERE IS SOME CONSISTENCY TO THE TYPES OF ROLES YOU WILL SEE. TYPICAL ROLES AND FUNCTIONS YOU MAY SEE ON THE HILL INCLUDE:

#### WASHINGTON, DC STAFF

*CHIEF OF STAFF (COS)/ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT (AA)*

- TYPICALLY RUNS THE OFFICE, MANAGES THE STAFF, AND SERVES AS THE CHIEF ADVISOR TO THE MEMBER OF CONGRESS.

*PRESS SECRETARY/COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR*

- MANAGES THE MEMBER'S MEDIA RELATIONS AND PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS.
- THIS OFTEN INCLUDES PRESS RELEASES, EVENT AND FLOOR SPEECHES, NEWSLETTERS, AND RESPONDING TO AND TRACKING MEDIA INQUIRIES.

*EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT/SCHEDULER*

- MANAGES THE MEMBER'S OFFICIAL SCHEDULE AND TRAVEL.
- SCHEDULING OFTEN ENTAILS CONSTITUENT MEETINGS, COMMITTEE MEETINGS AND HEARINGS, DISTRICT TRAVEL, RECEPTIONS AND SPECIAL EVENTS, AND PRESS CONFERENCES.

*LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR (LD)*

- SUPERVISES THE LEGISLATIVE STAFF AND OPERATIONS OF THE OFFICE.
- ADVISES THE MEMBER ON LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY IN ALL AREAS.
- FREQUENTLY APPROVES CORRESPONDENCE.

*LEGISLATIVE ASSISTANT (LA)*

- HANDLES LEGISLATIVE/POLICY ISSUES IN A SELECT NUMBER OF ISSUE AREAS.
- MONITORS AND ANALYZES SPECIFIC LEGISLATION AND RECOMMENDS ACTION TO THE MEMBER OF CONGRESS BASED ON THE MEMBER'S POSITION.
- TOPICS ARE TYPICALLY DIVIDED BASED ON THE MEMBER'S COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS AND GENERAL COMMITTEE BREAKDOWN OF ISSUES.
- FREQUENTLY MEETS WITH CONSTITUENTS REGARDING ISSUES IN THEIR ASSIGNED AREA.
- FREQUENTLY DRAFTS AND OR EDITS CORRESPONDENCE.

*LEGISLATIVE CORRESPONDENT (LC)*

- RECEIVES, LOGS, AND DRAFTS RESPONSE TO ALL CONSTITUENT GENERATED LEGISLATIVE MAIL.
- FREQUENTLY COORDINATES WRITTEN RESPONSE TO CONSTITUENTS WITH LAs AND LDs.
- SOME TYPICALLY HANDLE ONE OR TWO ISSUE AREAS AS WELL.

*SYSTEMS ADMINISTRATOR*

- RESPONSIBLE FOR THE OFFICE TECHNOLOGY- DATABASE, COMPUTERS, AND EQUIPMENT.
- THIS POSITION OFTEN OVERLAPS WITH THE LC OR AN OFFICE MANAGER POSITION.

*STAFF ASSISTANT/RECEPTIONIST*

- A POSITION NOT TO BE OVERLOOKED.
- THIS PERSON IS OFTEN THE FIRST ONE YOU SPEAK WITH ON THE PHONE, MEET WHEN YOU WALK IN THE OFFICE OR TALK WITH REGARDING GENERAL REQUESTS (FLAGS, TOURS, AND MAIL).
- THEY ARE FREQUENTLY A GATEKEEPER TO ALL OF THE INNER OFFICES AND MANY MOVE UP IN THE OFFICE AT A LATER DATE.

- BE ONE OF THE SMART ONES WHO DEVELOPS A RELATIONSHIP WITH THIS IMPORTANT STAFF MEMBER AND GATEKEEPER.

## **DISTRICT STAFF**

### *DISTRICT DIRECTOR*

- A POSITION NOT TO BE OVERLOOKED.
- RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF WASHINGTON, DC.

### *CASEWORKER /FIELD REPRESENTATIVE*

- HANDLES PERSONAL CONSTITUENT ISSUES WITH A FEDERAL AGENCY (I.E. SOCIAL SECURITY CHECKS, VETERAN'S BENEFITS, ETC).
- OFTEN COORDINATES DISTRICT EVENTS, OFFICE HOURS, AND MEETINGS THROUGHOUT THE DISTRICT.
- SERVES AS IN-DISTRICT CONTACT WHEN THE MEMBER IS IN WASHINGTON FOR LEGISLATIVE SESSION.

## **WHAT'S GOING ON IN THEIR HEADS- HOW TO WORK WITH CONGRESSIONAL STAFF**

*FIRST AND FOREMOST, STAFF IS HIRED TO REPRESENT THE MEMBER- NOT THEIR OWN ISSUES.*

- IT DOESN'T MATTER WHERE THEY STAND PERSONALLY ON AN ISSUE AS THEY ARE NOT THE ONES VOTING AND IT IS THEIR JOB TO ADVISE THE MEMBER IN THE MEMBER'S BEST INTEREST.
- SO WHILE YOU MAY ASK WHAT A STAFF MEMBER PERSONALLY THINKS ABOUT AN ISSUE, THEY SHOULDN'T TELL YOU.

*IN THAT VEIN, STAFF IS REPRESENTATIVE OF THE MEMBER.*

- THEY ARE REPRESENTING THE MEMBER "IN ABSENTIA."
- TALK TO THEM AS IF THEY WERE THE MEMBER.

*THEY MAY NOT GIVE YOU A GUARANTEED COMMITMENT ON THEIR FINAL VOTE ON A BILL WELL BEFORE THE VOTE TAKES PLACE- AND THAT'S OKAY.*

- TRY TO GET THEIR COMMITMENT TO YOUR POSITION IN GENERAL INSTEAD.
- THIS IS BECAUSE BILLS OFTEN CHANGE SIGNIFICANTLY UP UNTIL THE VERY END. IF ONE PARTICULAR AMENDMENT PASSES, IT MAY FORCE THE MEMBER TO VOTE DIFFERENTLY ON FINAL PASSAGE.
- FORCING A MEMBER OR STAFF TO ABSOLUTELY SAY THEY WILL VOTE FOR OR AGAINST A PARTICULAR BILL BEFORE THEY HAVE THE FINAL BILL COULD BORROW TROUBLE THAT MAY NOT BE NECESSARY OR EVEN RELEVANT.

*LOOK TO SPEAK TO THE STAFF MEMBER RESPONSIBLE FOR THAT PIECE OF LEGISLATION.*

- DON'T AUTOMATICALLY SEEK THE HIGHEST PAY GRADE PERSON YOU CAN SPEAK TO IN THE OFFICE.
- LOOK TO SPEAK WITH THE PERSON ASSIGNED TO THAT TOPIC, REGARDLESS OF LEVEL IN OFFICE - THEY ARE THE ONE ADVISING THE MEMBER AS/HE GOES TO VOTE. THAT BRIEFING OFTEN INCLUDES INFORMATION ON WHO IN THE DISTRICT IS ADVOCATING ON THAT LEGISLATION.
- IF YOU HAVEN'T TALKED TO THAT STAFFER, YOUR MESSAGE MAY NOT BE PASSED ALONG.

*YES, THEY ARE YOUNG.*

- YES, THEY HAVE NOT NECESSARILY DEVELOPED THEIR ISSUE AREA EXPERTISE BY ACTUALLY WORKING IN THE INDUSTRY.
- THEY WORK ON THE HILL BECAUSE THEY HAVE AN EXPERTISE (SOMETIMES DEVELOPING) ON THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS. THEY KNOW THE INS AND OUTS OF HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW, HOW TO AMEND A BILL, AND THE POLITICS OF POLITICS. AS AN ADVOCATE, EMBRACING THIS SITUATION OPENS THE OPPORTUNITY TO OFFER YOURSELF AS THAT ISSUE AREA EXPERT WHILE YOU GET THE BENEFIT OF AN INTERESTED AND OPEN EAR IN RETURN. A TRUE ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITY.

## MEETING FACE-TO-FACE

THE FACE-TO-FACE MEETING WITH A MEMBER OR STAFFER REMAINS THE BEST WAY TO COMMUNICATE YOUR POSITIONS ON LEGISLATIVE ISSUES. LEGISLATORS APPRECIATE CONSTITUENTS GIVING THEIR OPINIONS. MANY DECISIONS MADE BY LEGISLATORS ARE BASED ON PUBLIC RESPONSE-WHETHER IN PERSON, BY LETTER OR PHONE.

LEGISLATORS AND STAFFERS MEET WITH CONSTITUENTS BOTH IN WASHINGTON AND WHEN THEY ARE BACK IN THEIR HOME DISTRICT OR STATE. THE MOST EFFECTIVE VISITS INVOLVE AN ENTIRE DELEGATION, BUT INDIVIDUAL VISITS ALSO ARE EFFECTIVE. WHEN PREPARING FOR A MEETING, PLAN OUT THE INTERVIEW IN ADVANCE. LEGISLATORS AND STAFFERS MUST FEEL THAT THE MEETING WITH CONSTITUENTS WAS TIME WELL SPENT.

REMEMBER TO BE FRIENDLY AND CORDIAL. PERSONAL CONTACTS ARE THE BASIS FOR SUCCESSFUL LOBBYING.

WHEN YOU DECIDE TO TAKE THE INITIATIVE AND SET UP A MEETING WITH AN ELECTED OFFICIAL, YOU MAY WISH TO KEEP THE FOLLOWING SUGGESTIONS IN MIND:

1. WHEN YOU CALL YOUR LEGISLATOR'S OFFICE, TRY TO PROVIDE AS MUCH ADVANCE NOTICE AS POSSIBLE, PREFERABLY A MONTH OR MORE.
2. BE PREPARED TO ESTIMATE THE LENGTH OF TIME YOUR MEETING WILL TAKE, WHO WILL BE WITH YOU AND WHO THEY ARE, AND THE SUBJECT YOU WANT TO DISCUSS.
3. BE SURE YOU HAVE SOME BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON ANY PUBLIC OFFICIAL WITH WHOM YOU PLAN TO MEET.
4. IF YOU CANNOT ARRANGE A MUTUALLY CONVENIENT TIME FOR A MEETING WITH THE LEGISLATOR, DON'T HESITATE TO MENTION THE REASON FOR YOUR VISIT AND INQUIRE WHETHER SOMEONE ELSE ON THE LEGISLATOR'S STAFF CAN HELP YOU. A COMMON MISTAKE IS UNDERESTIMATING THE INFLUENCE WHICH STAFF MEMBERS CAN HAVE, AND -IF YOU WANT TO DISCUSS AN ISSUE-IT CAN SOMETIMES BE MORE BENEFICIAL TO HAVE YOUR MEETING WITH THE LEGISLATIVE ASSISTANT ASSIGNED TO THAT ISSUE.
5. IF SEVERAL PEOPLE ARE GOING TO THE MEETING, SELECT ONE PERSON TO ACT AS A SPOKESPERSON AHEAD OF TIME AND AGREE ON WHAT THE COMPANY POSITION IS AND HOW IT SHOULD BE PRESENTED.
6. BE SURE YOU UNDERSTAND ANY RELATED LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS PENDING ON THE ISSUE YOU PLAN TO DISCUSS, AS WELL AS SPECIFIC REASONS WHY YOU SUPPORT OR OPPOSE IT. THE IMPACT OF THE ISSUE ON A COMMUNITY, REGION, OR BUSINESS IS IMPORTANT, PARTICULARLY IN TERMS OF ITS EFFECT ON ECONOMIC GROWTH, EMPLOYMENT, AND THE LONG-TERM PUBLIC INTEREST.
7. WHEN MEETING WITH A LEGISLATOR TO DISCUSS AN ISSUE, PREPARE WHENEVER POSSIBLE A FACT SHEET OR LETTER DESCRIBING YOUR VIEWS WHICH CAN BE LEFT WITH THE LEGISLATOR. THIS ENSURES THAT THE LEGISLATOR WILL REMEMBER YOUR VIEWS AFTER THE MEETING.
8. WHILE IT IS CERTAINLY ACCEPTABLE TO DISAGREE WITH A LEGISLATOR OR STAFF MEMBER ON AN ISSUE, DO NOT BE ARGUMENTATIVE. THERE ARE ALWAYS TWO SIDES TO EVERY ISSUE, AND IF YOU HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO SELL THE MERITS OF YOUR CASE, REMEMBER THAT OTHER ISSUES WILL COME ALONG. IT IS BETTER TO LEAVE ON FRIENDLY TERMS SO THAT YOU WILL BE WELCOME NEXT TIME. IT'S ALSO TRUE THAT, EVEN THOUGH YOU DID NOT WIN YOUR CASE, THE FACT THAT YOU MADE AN EFFORT - AND WERE GRACIOUS IN ACCEPTING THE LEGISLATOR'S OPPOSING VIEWS - MAY AFFECT THE STRENGTH OF HIS OR HER POSITION.

9. DO NOT HESITATE TO ASK QUESTIONS OR SOLICIT QUESTIONS. PUBLIC OFFICIALS WILL BE IMPRESSED BY YOUR WILLINGNESS TO LEARN MORE ABOUT AN ISSUE FROM THEM, AND THEY WILL APPRECIATE YOUR ABILITY TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS THEY MAY HAVE.
10. WHILE IT IS ALL RIGHT TO ASK HOW A LEGISLATOR EXPECTS TO VOTE ON AN ISSUE, DO NOT TRY TO FORCE A COMMITMENT. QUITE JUSTIFIABLY, MANY LEGISLATORS PREFER TO HOLD THEIR DECISIONS IN ABEYANCE UNTIL HEARINGS ON A BILL AND THE FINAL DEBATES ARE COMPLETED.
11. FOLLOW UP YOUR MEETING WITH A PERSONAL LETTER, THANKING THE LEGISLATOR AND STAFF MEMBERS FOR THEIR TIME AND ATTENTION TO YOUR VIEWS.

## MEETING WITH LEGISLATIVE AIDES

BECAUSE OF THE HECTIC SCHEDULE KEPT BY EVERY MEMBER OF CONGRESS AND THE NUMBER OF ISSUES WITH WHICH THEY MUST BE FAMILIAR, CONSTITUENTS OFTEN MEET WITH LAs. THESE STAFF MEMBERS USUALLY COVER 10-15 MAJOR ISSUES AND SEVERAL MINOR ONES. LAs OFTEN ARE YOUNG (UNDER AGE 30) AND, BECAUSE OF THEIR INEXPERIENCE, MAY HAVE ONLY A PASSING FAMILIARITY WITH SOCMA AND ITS ISSUES. THEREFORE, IT IS CRITICAL TO PROVIDE THESE INDIVIDUALS WITH BACKGROUND INFORMATION PERTAINING TO A BILL, AS WELL AS INFORMATION ON SOCMA'S POSITION ON THE BILL.

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## **CONSTITUENT GATHERINGS**

THIS LAST ROUTE OF COMMUNICATION, THE CONSTITUENT GATHERING, IS USUALLY HELD WHEN THE LEGISLATOR IS IN HIS OR HER HOME STATE OR DISTRICT FOR A TOWN HALL MEETING. IT IS HERE THE LEGISLATOR AND THE CONSTITUENT MAY COME TOGETHER IN A MORE RELAXED ATMOSPHERE. MOST LEGISLATORS ARE EAGER TO ATTEND A GATHERING OF VOTERS, BECAUSE THE LEGISLATOR HAS THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN VOTERS' VIEWS AND LOBBY FOR THEIR SUPPORT AT THE POLLS.

## HOW TO FOLLOW UP

AFTER MEETING WITH YOUR LEGISLATOR, FOLLOW UP WITH THANK YOU NOTES TO ALL THE STAFF YOU MET WITH, AS WELL AS THE MEMBER OF CONGRESS. IF YOU TOOK ANY PHOTOS, SEND ONE OR TWO DIGITAL SHOTS TO THE MEMBER'S STAFF-MOST ELECTED OFFICIALS HAVE PHOTO GALLERIES ON THEIR WEBSITES WITH PICTURES FROM RECENT TRIPS AND MEETINGS.

HERE IS A SAMPLE THANK YOU LETTER:

YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS

TODAY'S DATE

THE HONORABLE YOUR MEMBER OF CONGRESS  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVE OR SENATE  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515 OR 20510

DEAR CONGRESSMAN/CONGRESSWOMAN/SENATOR:

I WANT TO THANK YOU FOR MEETING WITH ME ON DATE, TO DISCUSS MY CONCERNS REGARDING ISSUE TOPIC. AS I MENTIONED IN OUR DISCUSSION, RESTATE FACTS AND CONCERNS.

IF POSSIBLE, INCLUDE A FEW LINES ABOUT HOW THE ISSUE YOU NOTED ABOVE AFFECTS YOUR BUSINESS.

AGAIN, THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND CONSIDERATION. I LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING WITH YOU ON ISSUE.

SINCERELY,

YOUR SIGNATURE

FIRST NAME LAST NAME