Strategies for Collaborating with Your Elected Officials

2010 Inaugural Georgia Bike Summit

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October 9, 2010
Introduction

- Education
- Background
- Experience
- Lobbying 101
Know Before You Go

- Individuals and organizations have the right to participate in the legislative process.
- State government, its branches and agencies exist to serve the people:
  - It affects every aspect of our lives.
  - It responds to the wishes of the people.
  - Silence is not golden.
As an American citizen, you CAN:

- Make campaign contributions
- Host a ‘meet and greet’ with a candidate in your home
- Volunteer in a candidate’s campaign
Keys to Effective Advocacy

- Know your issues and always be honest
- The legislature is the ultimate abstract environment, so keep your issue real
- Communication with elected officials should be brief, direct, early, frequent and interactive
Keys to Effective Advocacy

- Sometimes the most effective and influential advocates are a legislator’s family, friends and other local elected officials.

- Good advocacy is non-partisan.

- One constituent contact is twice as valuable as a non-constituent contact.
Keys to Effective Advocacy

- Legislators are not magicians, nor are they omniscient
- Never underestimate the minority party
- Don’t pester, never offend
Resources

- www.votesmart.org
- www.sos.ga.gov
- www.legis.ga.gov
- www.gban.org

- At Home
  - www.georgia.gov
  - Correspondence
    - Letters
    - Email
    - Phone
  - District Offices
  - Volunteer

- At The Capitol
  - Clerk’s Offices
  - Legislative Offices
  - Committee Meetings
Tools and Tactics

- Educate
  - Invite your local elected officials for a tour of your organization or business
  - Meet with elected officials in their district offices

- Exhibit
  - Invite elected officials to attend local events
  - Request elected officials to speak at events
  - Invite them to participate in a meeting of your board of directors or membership
Communication Guidelines

- Writing, emailing, calling and meeting in person are all effective ways of getting your message across to elected officials.
  - It doesn’t take many ‘hits’ on a topic to get a legislator’s attention.
  - Elected officials are more likely to take notice when the messages come from constituents.
- Check government websites for biographies and contact information of your elected officials.
- Write or contact the entire committee who is handling your issue or legislation.
Written Communication

- Always
  - Use the correct and formal address and salutation
  - Write or type clearly
  - Include your return address
  - Use your own words and stationery
  - Keep your message focused
  - Be brief, but thorough
  - Make it personal and use specific examples
  - Be considerate, but be persistent
  - Thank them for their time and attention

- Never
  - Use a negative, condescending, threatening or intimidating tone
Telephone Communication

- **Always**
  - Ask to speak directly with the legislator or their aide/staff who is handling your issue
  - Be prepared with your message and BE BRIEF
  - Leave your full name, address and telephone number
  - Follow up your phone call with a note thanking them for their time, a summary of your position and any additional resources if they have been requested

- **Never**
  - Bluff or fabricate. If you do not have an answer say that you will get back to them and then provide the appropriate follow-up
Face to Face Communication

- Always
  - Call ahead to schedule an appointment
  - Arrive on time
  - Be articulate
  - Be direct
  - Use supporting materials if available
  - Write a thank you letter

- Never
  - Show up unannounced
  - Assail those who may oppose your issue
Questions?

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