How to Influence The Legislature Without Leaving Home

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How to Influence the Legislature Without Leaving Home

- Trends in effective lobbying is “grassroots” participation. This is essentially people expressing themselves from their home or office on matters affecting their world.
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- If you don’t say something, someone else will
  - Saying nothing about an issue invites other perspectives to speak up... and you might not like what they have to say.
- Getting the “message” out about issues is critical in influencing elected officials.
- “Showing up is 90 percent of the battle.”
  - Being present makes a difference.
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• Preparation
  - Before you call, do your homework.
  - Rehearse, Practice and Study materials
  - Bring the issue “home”
  - Advocacy is a marathon, not a sprint
  - Know the Member
  - Know their voting record
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- Relationships
  - Get to Know Staff and their roles
    - Chief of Staff, Staff Director, Scheduler, Leg. Director, Leg. Assistant, Field Director
  - In District, Tallahassee, and Washington DC offices
  - You can do this from home!
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- Catch ‘em at Home!
Members schedule appointments, events, town hall meetings when in the district
- Invite them to Your meetings

- Provide Photo and Press Opportunities

• Relationships (Cont.)
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• Communications

• Your Style Matters...
  - Be Brief – if you can’t explain it in 90 seconds or less you might lose them.
    - Don’t clutter the message
  - Don’t Tirade, Be Civil
    - Too passionate......

may not be most helpful
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- “Going Postal”
  - Regular Mail
    Slowest Form of Communication
    Might come back as very effective means
    Harder to forget about than emails

- Other Services
  - FedEx, UPS Next Day, Priority
  - Faster, but not more effective
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- Voice
  - Calls During the Workday...
  - Know District and Tallahassee/DC Office Numbers Easy to find online

Be Willing to Talk to Staff
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- Voice Mail After Hours

Call the direct office lines
Be Brief, Succinct, Don’t Ramble

Leave your name, address, phone number and email address
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- **Electronic**
  - Fax
    - Believe it or not but most offices still have one
    - Keep it simple! Stick to One Message
    - Timing is everything – good for after hours.
    - Use letterhead if you have it
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- Electronic (cont.)
  - Email
    Include Address and Zip Code............ Members typically only respond to emails from the District
    Find out Staff email addresses
    Any time – day or night
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- Electronic (cont.)
  - Internet
    - Web forms on individual member sites
    - Use email services from different advocacy websites
    - Social media: Facebook and Twitter
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Use the Media......

“Public opinion affects legislative opinion.”
Write letters to the editor, opinion/editorials.
- Use legislators names if possible

Hold press conferences
Arrange editorial board meetings
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- **Using the District /State Offices**
  - Do this NOW, don’t wait for an issue

- Local issues, Local Solutions

- For these matters, this is the place!
  Many federal agencies have local offices
  Know the caseworkers and their role
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- **Using the District/State Offices (cont.)**

  Use the staff to help influence at the Capitol.
  Well established contact with the district staff can be used as a conduit to the Capitol professional staff and the Member.

  Use the staff to arrange appointments.
  A good relationship with district staff can provide access to the Member and Capitol staff.
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• “Where you stand depends on where you sit.”
  Know your allies
  Know your enemies
• Who are you dealing with?
  Know your member
• Make a Self Assessment...
  Know yourself, and your abilities
• Assess the political climate...
  Know the institutional mood...it matters!
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- “Honesty is not the best policy...it is the only policy!!”

- “You don’t make peace by talking to your allies”

- “Politics makes strange bed fellows”
  Today’s opponent may be tomorrow’s ally.

- “Always be civil, no matter how irritating the opponents may appear to be.”
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“The number one no-no in legislative relations is to circumvent staff and only talk to the Member.”

Legislative staff may seem uninformed

- But so can an 800_lb. Gorilla – you don’t want to rile either one!
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- Make the effort
- Don’t be Afraid or Intimidated
- Get Others Involved
- Be Creative
- Be Visible
- Be Tenacious – Follow-up!!
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You really can make a difference and effectively influence Congress and the Florida Legislature from your home or office – it’s the new trend in lobbying. Be a part of it!