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SUCCESSFUL LOBBYING:
A PRIMER FOR
LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY

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THE ART OF LOBBYING

By Congressman Lee Hamilton of Indiana

1. **BE CANDID.** Lay it on the line in frank communication with your elected official. He recognizes your self interest. You need not apologize for it. If you feel you should apologize for it, then you had better get out of the business you are in.
2. **BE HONEST.** State your own view and bias. If you choose, relate to the public interest. He is interested in what you have to say, and he wants your honest appraisal of the situation.
3. **AVOID SUSPICION** of the elected official's integrity unless the evidence is strong. Not long ago, one lobbyist, angered at a vote I case, wrote a letter to me beginning, "Dear Congressman, is you were only honest with yourself you would admit..." Needless to say, that approach didn't sit too well with me. I will remember that lobbyist for a good many months to come - but not too fondly.
4. **BE BRIEF.** Your contact will have greater impact if it is kept reasonably brief. Elected officials have an enormous volume of reading material. You should write of contact your elected official whenever there is a genuine concern but don't try to become a constant pen pal. Write often if you think that it is necessary, but keep it brief. Don't burden your elected official with long notes on every conceivable subject.
5. **BE INFORMATIVE.** Make sure your elected official understands the problem. Lobbyists often make the mistake of over-estimating the legislators knowledge and understand of the issue. Remember we have over 20,000 bills before the Congress this year. You must be prepared to deal with the elected official on several levels of comprehension. He/she may have detailed knowledge of the subject matter, in which case you had better be prepared to respond in detail. On the other hand, he/she may not have heard of the bill. Your response must be gauged to his level of knowledge.
6. **DON'T DEMAND** that the elected official take a public stand on a specific bill before he has all the facts. He is well aware that you are presenting one side. Major bills usually have two sides to be considered and you may have only heard one of them. A bill may be 100 pages long with 50 provisions in addition to the one you are concerned about. He is forced to vote on the whole bill, weighing the good and the bad. Remember too, that a bill rarely becomes law in the same form it is introduced. It is possible that the bill you write to him about is one that you would oppose once it gets to the floor.
7. **BE CONSTRUCTIVE.** Try not to say just what is wrong with the bill. Try to solve the elected official's problem for him. Remember he is looking for solutions.
8. **THANK YOUR ELECTED OFFICIAL** when he does something right. Elected officials are like anyone else. They like to be thanked for their efforts.
9. **BE ACCURATE.** I once received a letter addressed "Mr. Hamilton, United States Senator, Capitol Building, Indianapolis, Indiana". It began Dear Congressman Bahy. Obviously, that letter did not receive careful attention from me. Suffice it to say that this is the most important suggestion of all. The cardinal sin is to supply faulty information.

FIRST AND FOREMOST

- DO Communicate with legislators before votes, preferably early in bill process
- DO Know the facts about each proposal
- DO Be concise and to the point.
- DO Use bill number and title when applicable
- DO Mention the number of people you represent if you are a leader in your organization
- DO Meet with the legislators, especially new legislators, prior to legislative session
- DO Aim for friendly interchanges that make the most of the short time available
- DO Find out as much about the personal background of the legislator as possible prior to contacting him/her

- DON'T Try to solve all your problems in one visit. Present only those issues (no more than two) of greatest concern to you and about which your legislator can do something.
- DON'T Overstay your welcome on a visit. Make your presentation brief. If your legislator wishes to prolong the conversation you will sense it.
- DON'T Be disappointed if your legislator is late or must send someone else to see you, such as a legislative assistant. You will be able to accomplish just as much under these circumstances.
- DON'T Be late to a meeting with your legislator
- DON'T Expect miracles. It has taken time to produce all of the problems which have resulted from legislation and it will take time to remedy them.

TIPS FOR CONTACTING LEGISLATORS

EFFECTIVE PERSONAL CONTACT:

At the Capitol:

1. Make an appointment
2. Limit your conversation to no more than 15 minutes
3. Send an experienced person with an unexperienced person.
4. Limit your group to no more than 4 persons. If your group is larger, select a spokesperson and someone to make notes on what the legislator says.
5. Contact legislators from your own area first. Also contact those legislators from areas where you formerly lived or where you have relatives residing.
6. Know your subject and be prepared to answer questions.
7. Explain to your legislator w\exactly what you wish him to do and why.
8. Be courteous but forceful. Belligerence or anger will be counterproductive.
9. Prepare a brief written account of your points and leave this with your legislator. Include a documentation of the facts.
10. Keep up contacts on a continuing basis. It takes time to establish a working relationship.
11. Make a brief written report of your meeting to your local membership.
12. Assign someone to keep a file on each legislator. File should include voting record and personal data.

At Home:

1. Make sure the time is convenient.
2. Contact prior to legislative session and set up schedule for continued meetings during session. Offer to act as a resource for information on any health related legislation.
3. Send an informal group from your association to meet with your legislator at home.
4. Invite your legislators to share a meal with your executive board or legislative committee.
5. Utilize the resources of your membership. Someone usually has some personal relationship with at least one of your legislators.

EFFECTIVE TELEPHONE COMMUNICATIONS:

1. Call only at a reasonable hour.
2. Use the telephone to call your legislator at home to set up informal meetings.
3. Schedule meetings at his office through his secretary.
4. Contact your legislator by telephone when time is a factor.
5. Know what you are going to say before you telephone. Make it brief and to the point.

PHONE NUMBERS TO KNOW:

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES	1-800-282-5800
SENATE	1-800-282-5803

A central answering service will answer your call. Give them the name of the legislator you wish to contact. You may also leave a clear concise message to be delivered to your legislator, such as “Please vote yes on HB 167.”

LOBBYING THROUGH THE MEDIA:

1. Work with the local PR Chairperson to establish media contacts prior to the legislative sessions.
2. Deliver press releases to local media.
3. Send letters to the editor outlining groups priorities.
4. Schedule local officers on radio and TV talk shows
5. Submit guest editorials to local media.
6. Distribute flyers and posters in the community.
7. Set up meetings with community members and leaders and publicize these through the media.

EFFECTIVE LETTER WRITING:

1. Make sure of correct address, name, title, room number, office building, city, state, and zip code.
2. Make your point in the first paragraph. Make it clear. Mention the bill number if applicable. State whether you are for or against the bill or issue, and why it affects you personally.
3. All of your letters should be one page, one side. Attachments to support your point of view are okay. Put exact return address on envelope and letter. Include your phone number.
4. Expressions of general opinion, unless directly connected with an issue, i.e., welfare, governmental hiring, bureaucracy etc. are usually not treated with respect.
5. Write sincere, complimentary letters as often as letters of complaint. (If you do, you are more likely to be remembered and listened to.) Forget about form letters, they don't work.
6. Make it your own letter in your own style. Be conversational. Say I believe, not It is believed.
7. Be informed on both sides of the issue and use facts that are pertinent.
8. Control emotion - but don't leave it out entirely. Be courteous rather than vindictive. Threats will backfire.
9. In addressing legislators it is much better to address them as Dear Senator or Dear Representative rather than Honorable ---. That term is considered to be old fashioned.
10. Use organization stationery when you are writing as a representative of your organization.
11. Send your letter at the appropriate time. Best time to express an opinion is early in the process of formulating the bill or during committee hearings. A request for a yea or nay vote on a bill will be more effective if you have had prior contact with your legislator on that issue.

YOU CAN SEND UP TO 100 WORDS IN A MAILGRAM FOR A NOMINAL FEE AND HAVE IT CHARGED TO YOUR HOME PHONE. In Georgia, call 1-800-257-2231.