Working with Legislators:

What can I do and how do I do it?

Mike Glasgow, RD,CD

Never doubt that a small group of **thoughtful committed** *citizens* can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

Margaret Mead

One Voice

Individuals and organizations are more effective if they speak with one unified voice.

One message – the same message.

Why does it matter?

Federal and state rules and regulations profoundly affect the services we can provide for our clients.

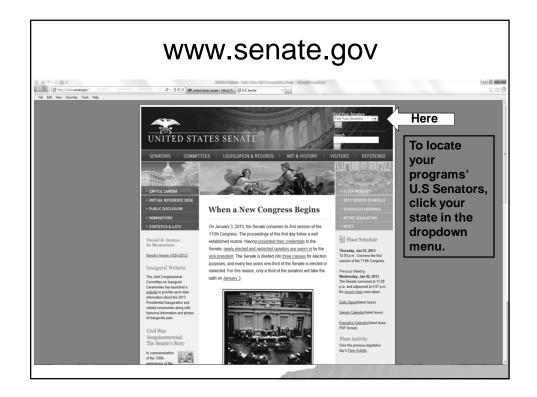
- Examples: Nutrition standards, background checks, target populations, etc.
- ◆ Federal and state funding
- ◆ Older Americans Act
- ♦ Farm Bill
- ◆ Tax deductions on charitable contributions

Who's Who - Federal

Three branches of government:

- ◆ <u>Legislative</u> (Congress)— makes the laws
 - -Senate: 2 from each state, 6-year terms
 - House: currently set to 435 (populationdriven), 2-year terms
- ◆ Executive enforces the laws of the US
 - President, VP, White House
- ◆ <u>Judicial</u> interprets the laws
 - Supreme Court, et al.





Who's Who – State Example: Wisconsin

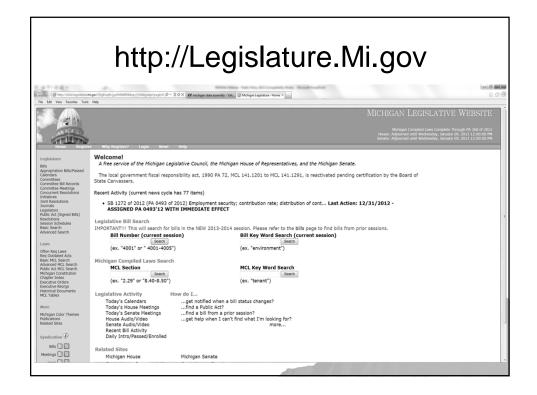
◆ Governor

- Chief Executive of the state
- Unlimited 4-year terms elected by the masses in general election
- Considerable control over state budget
- Power of appointment of many officials
- Commander-in-Chief of state National Guard when not under federal control

Who's Who – State Example: Wisconsin

- ◆ State Senate
 - 33 in state of Wisconsin.May serve unlimited 4-year terms
 - Term limits vary from state to state.
- ◆ State House of Representatives or State Assembly
 - 99 members in Wisconsin.May serve unlimited 2-year terms.
 - -Term limits vary (e.g. MI = 3, 2-yr terms)





Federal and State Legislation

- ◆ Older Americans Act
 - Each state gets \$XX based on population. States determine how to distribute within their state
- ◆ Farm Bill Senior Farmers' Market Voucher Program
 - States get \$XX. State decides how to distribute funds. Not all states get it, and all are not distributed state-wide.

State Legislation Example: Wisconsin

- ◆ Senior Nutrition Program
 - -Older Americans Act Nutrition Program
 - State of Wisconsin provides about \$13M for OAA aging programs from the state's General Purpose Revenue fund
 - Census shifts have left some counties with fewer low-income seniors leading to a decrease in funding
 - Need to advocate for additional funding for those counties

Statute vs. Regulation

- ◆ Legislature enacts statutes.
- ◆ Statute = law
- ◆ Regulation outlines how the law will be enacted.
 - Federal law → state statute → legislative language in State Administrative Code
- ◆ Regulation = rules that outline how the law will be enacted and enforced (the details)

Statute vs. Regulation

- ◆ Statutory Code
 - State law passed by the state legislature and signed by the governor
- ◆ Administrative Code
 - State regulations written by the appropriate department
 - Same authority and enforcement as statute



Politics should be the part time job of every citizen

Dwight D. Eisenhower

Advocacy vs. Lobbying

◆ Examples of Advocacy:

- Telling your legislator how a federal grant your organization received has helped your customers / clientele.
- Educating a legislator about the effects of a policy on your constituency.
- Inviting a legislator to visit your organization so that he/she may see firsthand how federal funding or a policy affects day-to-day operations and the difference it makes.

http://www.ncoa.org/public-policy-action/advocacy-toolkit/

Advocacy vs. Lobbying

◆ Examples of Lobbying:

- Asking your legislator to vote for or against, or amend introduced legislation.
- Emailing a "call to action" to your members urging them to contact their member of Congress in support of action on introduced legislation or pending regulations.
- Preparing materials or organizing events in support of lobbying activities.

http://www.ncoa.org/public-policy-action/advocacy-toolkit/

Lobbyist

- ◆Lobbyist: Any individual
 - (1) who is either employed or retained by a client for financial or other compensation
 - (2) whose services include more than one lobbying contact; and
 - (3) whose lobbying activities constitute 20 percent or more of his or her services' time on behalf of that client during any three-month period.

- Office of the Clerk, US House of Representatives

Individual Lobbying

It is your democratic right, protected by the First Amendment, to voice your personal opinions on legislation and lobby your government officials. Your voice is important.

Non-profits and Lobbying

- ◆ Non-profits are allowed to engage in lobbying activities, provided they do not engage in excessive lobbying or spend a certain percentage of their budget on lobbying efforts.
- Non-profits may lobby but need to follow their state's rules for lobbying

Aging Advocacy Resources

- NCOA Advocacy Toolkit <u>http://www.ncoa.org/public-policy-action/advocacy-toolkit</u>
- NCOA Nutrition Advocacy Toolkit
 http://www.ncoa.org/public-policy-action/advocacy-toolkit/advocacy-toolkit-nutrition.html

SO WHAT?!?



What do we need to do?

- ◆ Legislators need to know who we are!
 - -What / who are we?
 - What do we do to keep their constituents healthy?
 - How do we relate to them and their committee or agency?
 - How can we be resources for them?

What do we need to do?

Law makers need to know what we can do for them to make their jobs easier.

How can we help them help their constituents?

What can I do?

- ◆Legislators need and expect their constituents to contact them about issues they are passionate about.
- ◆Be concise, but cover all the points you wish to make. Most meetings last less than 30 minutes, so budget your time wisely and leave time for discussion.

It is not enough to be compassionate. You must act.

Tenzin Gyatso

What can I do?

- ◆ Establish a relationship with their staffer
- ♦ Visit face-to-face
- ◆ Call
- Write
- ◆ Email
- ◆ Invite them to do a site visit at your organization/program (officials currently in office)
- ◆ Use social media
- ◆ Local press

What can I do?

- ◆Explain why the issue is important to you and to people in your district/state.
- ◆Explain the consequences that adverse action or failure to act will have on individuals in your state, city, or town.

What can I do?

- ◆After you make your points, request specific action, and don't be afraid to ask the legislator's position.
- ◆Follow the visit with a letter or email thanking the member or staffer for their time and briefly summarizing the major issues discussed.

Tips for More Effective Advocacy Efforts

- Don't be intimidated.
- Be professional and courteous.
- ◆ Keep it simple.
- Make it personal tell stories about people in their districts.
- Ask for the sale.

Making Your Case

- ◆ Know the facts: Use current data to discuss your issue.
- ◆ Tell stories: Stories are powerful and persuasive!
- ◆ Use positive language: <u>Give people</u> <u>something to be FOR</u>, not against.
- ◆ Be mindful of timing: Pay attention to current news events, lawmakers' schedules, etc.

Look and Play the Part

- ◆ Dress for success
 - Business professional
- ♦ Speak confidently using professional language
 - Speak about your issue in language they can understand.
 - Limit use of acronyms and other terms that are specific only to your program.
 - -Limit slang terms.



Look and play the part

- ◆ Smile during introductions.
- ◆ Nice firm handshake with a smile.
- ◆ Look them in the eye when you're speaking with them.
- ♦ Sit or stand attentively.
- ◆ Do not interrupt or get aggressive.
- ◆ Act polite and professional at all times.

What NOT to do!

- Don't threaten your legislator.
- ◆ Don't be anonymous.
- Don't pretend to speak for everyone.
- ◆ Don't be a pest.
- ◆ Don't insist on immediate action.
- Don't speak without doing your homework.

The "Pre-Meeting" Meeting

- Meet 10 to 15 minutes before each appointment.
- ◆Review your talking points. What is your message?
- ◆Review your legislative ask.
- Choose your words carefully, and don't share too much too early.

The "Pre-Meeting" meeting

- ◆Review what each person will contribute to the meeting.
- ◆Select roles/topics that each person will address.
- ◆Don't be afraid to take notes while in the meeting.

Introductions (2-3 Minutes) The Hook: Who You Are

- ◆ Everyone should briefly introduce themselves.
- ◆ Talk about where you work, go to school, live, etc... This will help your local official get to know you.
- ◆ BRING BUSINESS CARDS!!

Personal Stories (3-5 Minutes) The Line: Why You Care

- ◆ Share why you are involved in this initiative – BE BRIEF, CLEAR and CONCISE.
- ◆ Share why it is important to you.
- ◆ Share a poignant and personal story that is relevant to this issue.
- ◆ This is the most powerful tool that you have at your disposal!

A home-delivered meal driver arrived to deliver a meal and heard a faint call for help. He walked around the house and found a bedroom window cracked slightly. He took off the screen, pried the window open, crawled in, and found the 89-year-old gentleman on the floor. He had fallen the night before. His sigh of relief to have help was great. The driver made him comfortable, called the ambulance and waited until they arrived....

The Ask (5-7 Minutes) The Sinker: What You Want That Person to Do

- ◆ Present the issue, and stay on message.
- ◆ Make your legislative "ask" very clear.
- ◆ Don't be afraid to ask for a commitment.
- ◆ Be sure to listen to all responses.
- ◆ Remember "The Ask" is the ultimate goal of your meeting!

Wrap-up (1-2 Minutes) Thank You and Pleasantries

- ◆ Point out the information in the leave behind packets or handouts.
- ◆ Thank the official for their time
- ◆ Be sure to send a follow-up thank you via thank-you card or email
- ◆ Be sure to provide any further information that may be needed with your thank-you

Post Meeting Wrap-up

- ◆ Take a few moments after your meeting and review what really happened.
- ♦ Will he or she support your efforts?
- ♦ What follow up is needed? Who will be responsible for follow up?
- ♦ Was anything revealed about how his/her colleagues may feel about this issue?
- ◆ Record your relevant information, and share it as needed.

THANK YOU! Any questions?

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