The Value of Advocacy: How to Win Friends and Influence Policy on Capitol Hill

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The Value of Advocacy: How to Win Friends and Influence Policy on Capitol Hill

- The Legislative Process
- Getting involved in the process
- How to contact your legislator
- Tips for a successful advocacy visit
- Clinical Laboratory Coalition
- Political Action Committees (PACs)
Why Is Congress so Confusing?

How a bill becomes a law (sort of!)

The Legislative Process

- Bill Introduced
- Referred to Committee
  - 19 House and 16 Senate Committees
  - Senate Finance
  - Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP)
  - House Committee on Ways and Means
  - House Committee on Energy and Commerce
The Legislative Process

- **Committee Action – Mark Up**
  - Chances for passage are determined here
  - Only about 1% of bills referred to committee are ever actually considered by the committee

- **Schedule Floor Action**
  - Bill is reported back to the chamber where it originated and placed in chronological order on the calendar

- **Debate**
  - Bill is debated and amendments may be added

- **Voting**
  - After debate and approval of amendments, bill is passed or defeated
The Legislative Process

- **Referral to Other Chamber**
  - Referred to other chamber
  - Same route through committee and floor action
  - This chamber may
    - Approve the bill as received
    - Reject it
    - Ignore it
    - Change it

The Legislative Process

- **Conference Committee Action**
  - Formed when actions of the other chamber significantly alter the bill
  - If conferees unable to reach agreement, bill dies
  - If agreement reached
    - Conference report prepared with recommendations
    - Both House and Senate must approve
The Legislative Process

• Bill Sent to President
  – President Signs – Bill becomes law
  – President takes no action for 10 days while Congress is in session – Bill becomes law
  – President can Veto - bill dies
  – or Pocket Veto – no action for 10 days after Congress adjourns – bill dies
  – Override veto with 2/3 vote by house & senate

Access Point #1: The Idea Stage

What can advocates do?
• Language development
• “There Oughta Be a Law
Access Point #2: Introduction

What can advocates do?
• “Dear Colleagues” asking for cosponsorship
• Action alerts to collect cosponsors

Access Point #3: Committee Hearings and Markup

What can advocates do?
• Ask legislators to testify / submit letters
• Submit statements for the record
• Work with a national association on testifying
Hearing Testimony

House Small Business Committee Hearing on Competitive Bidding

July 2007

Access Point #4: Floor Consideration

What can advocates do?

• Follow the Rules Committee process (House only and more later)
• Ask legislators to vote for or against legislation
• Ask legislators to make statements for legislative history
Getting Involved in the Process

• Why should you get involved?
  – Medicare Fee Schedule Modernization
  – Workforce Shortage
• Important as members of profession to engage in public policy process at the grassroots level
• Be PROACTIVE……not REACTIVE

Getting Involved –How to Begin

• Learn about the issues facing the Clinical Lab industry
  – Attend sessions like this
  – Read journals – subscribe to newsletters
  – Utilize your CLMA/ASCLS membership benefits
    • e-mail updates and e-mail alerts
    • Web sites www.clma.org  www.ascls.org
      – CLMA:Policy section & Advocacy Materials
      – ASCLS:Current Issues Impacting the Profession
Getting Involved – How to Begin

- Know who represents you in Congress
  - Learn key facts about senators and congressmen (biography on web site)
  - Where are their local offices?
  - What committees are they on? Do they have a leadership role? What is their seniority?
  - Do they have a history of supporting clinical lab issues?
  - Have they sponsored/co-sponsored lab bills?

The POWER of Advocacy

Elected officials pay attention to the people who elect them, but only if those people know how to use their “Power of Constituency”

This is why YOUR voice is so important
So You Want to be a Lobbyist

What is a lobbyist and what does it mean to lobby?

Lobbyist – someone who tries to influence someone to take one position over another on a particular issue

We’re all lobbyist almost every day: at home, at work
What makes it Effective?

Professional lobbyists – more access – know the system – know people

LOBBYING IS 75% EDUCATION

Contacting Your Legislator

• In the state
  – Know where the state/district offices are
    • Phone book, web site
  – Good first point of contact in many cases
  – May help you get to the right person in DC or pass on your concerns
Contacting Your Legislator

• In the state
  – Watch for events in the home district/state
    • Town Hall Meetings
    • Fundraisers
    • Senior Citizen Centers
    • Hospitals
  – Get schedule from member’s website, ask to be put on mailing list, watch newspaper, call local office

Contacting Your Legislator

• In the state
  – Invite the member or staff to your facility
  – Invite member or staff to your meetings
  – Participate in Legislative Days sponsored by cities
Advocacy in Action!

Advocacy in Action!

[Image of people in a laboratory setting]
Contacting Your Legislator-In D.C.

• Learn contacts
  – Scheduler—contact if you want to meet in DC
  – Legislative Assistant (LA)—handle bulk of policy work
    • If you want to talk, in person or by phone, about a particular policy issue, ask for the LA that handles that issue
  – Legislative Director (LD) – handles some policy issues, but also oversees the legislative staff
  – Chief of Staff/ Administrative Assistant (AA) – oversees the entire operation.

Contacting Your Legislator-In D.C.

• Facts to Keep in Mind
  – Staff
    • House – 15 staff, 6 in district office
    • Senate- 35, based on population
    • Levels pretty much unchanged since the 80’
  – Since 1995 when internet became available on Capitol Hill combined mail & e-mail has increased >300% (50 million to 200 million/ communications per year)
  – 10 – 15,000 visitors per week in the DC office
How Do We Break Through the Chaos?

You need to know:

What do you want?
Who should you ask?
How should you ask?
How should you follow up?

What do You Want?

Make “The Ask”
– Be specific
  • Sponsor or co-sponsor a bill (use bill name)
  • Send a letter to a federal agency
  • Where do they stand on an issue/upcoming vote
  • Support or oppose legislation with vote
  • Simple things
    – Site visit
    – Newsletter article
    – Meeting with members of group
Who Should You Ask?

- Talk to the right person – usually the Legislative Assistant if a particular issue
- DC politics is built on networks and relationships.

How Should you Ask?

- Written Communication (includes e-mail)
- Phone Call
  - Request to vote for or against a bill
  - Timely
- Office Visit
Contacting Your Legislator-In D.C.

- Written Message by e-mail or fax (don’t use regular mail)
  - Identify yourself as a constituent
  - Address to member or contact, if known
  - Mass e-mail, form “letter” – not effective if not personal or set apart from others. Staffers don’t appreciate full mailboxes
  - List home and work address, phone, fax & e-mail

Contacting Your Legislator-In D.C.

- Correspondence Sorted By:
  - Not from the district/state – referred
  - Form Letter – reply if time
  - Letters from crazies – go to the FBI
  - Personal, thoughtful, from the district/state
  - People who ask again (second request)
  **Quality** is more persuasive than quantity
  **Volume** does not always equal effectiveness
Contacting Your Legislator-In D.C.

• Phone calls to the DC Office
  – Ask to speak with the staff person handling the issue (May have to leave a message)
  – Identify yourself as a constituent
  – Address only one issue
  – Be brief and specific – “Make the Ask”
  – State your reasons
  – Ask for follow-up

Contacting Your Legislator

• Tips for Written & Phone Messages
  – Identify yourself and that you are a constituent
  – Begin by stating your purpose for writing/calling
  – If regarding specific legislation, identify bill
    HR_______  S________
  – Be sure to “Make the Ask”
    • Be brief, direct and persuasive
  – Address only one issue
  – Include how it affects you, your facility, your city, your job
    ALL POLITICS IS LOCAL!!!!
  – Include all contact information-home & work address, phone, fax and e-mail
**Capitol Hill Visit-Planning**

- **Plan Your Visit Carefully**
  - Be clear about what is is you want to achieve
  - Determine in advance which committee staff you need to meet with to achieve your purpose
- **Make an Appointment**
  - Contact Scheduler/Health Legislative Assistant
  - Provide basic info-name, profession, facility, reason for the visit
  - **Identify yourself as a constituent**
    - Confirm date, time, place and person you will meet

**Capitol Hill Visit-What to Expect**

- Busy, chaotic, other groups and Members in the halls, bells for votes
- Security measures to enter the buildings
- Meet in small conference rooms with Staff member
- May meet in waiting area or even in hallway (lobby)
- Member of Congress may or may not attend
- Expect (and appreciate) youth
Capitol Hill Visit-Senate

- 100 members housed in Russell, Dirksen and Hart Office Buildings
- More time for visits, more spacious
- More staffers, more experienced, more expertise, longer retention

Capitol Hill Visit-House

- 435 members housed in Cannon, Longworth and Rayburn Office Buildings
- Less time for visits, smaller offices
- Fewer staffers, less experienced, handling more issues, may be fresh out of college
Capitol Hill Visit – The Visit

- PROMPT
- PATIENT
- PREPARED
- POSITION
- POLITICAL
- PERSUASIVE

- Be Prompt
  - Don’t be late – time is very important

- Be Patient
  - Not uncommon for member to be late or be interrupted
  - Be flexible


**Capitol Hill Visit – The Visit**

- **Be Prepared**
  - Select a primary spokesperson
  - Prepare brief talking points in advance
  - Be clear and specific about what you are asking the member to do—cite specific bill numbers
  - Prepare information supporting your position
  - Members often lack information about pros and cons of an issue—**you must be the teacher**

- **Be Prepared (cont’d)**
  - Don’t include technical jargon
  - Realize there are varying levels of knowledge among Congress
  - Members/staffers work on many issues besides yours
  - Plan for about 5 - 10 minutes—be brief, direct
    - Average visit lasts 7.5 minutes
  - Have “leave behind” information
“Gift of GAB” Rule

- **Greet:** “Hello, my name is ___. I live ___. I work ___. Serve people in ___ in the member’s district. I represent _________.

- **Acknowledge:** Let them know you did your homework.
  - “Knowing of the Congressman’s interest in fair and equitable payments for Medicare services, we believe he would be interested in legislation to modernize the Medicare fee schedule for clinical laboratories.”

- **Bring it Home:** **MAKE THE ASK!!!!**
  “We’re hoping that the Congressman will sign on as a co-sponsor to HR 1452, the bill to Modernize the Medicare Clinical Lab Fee Schedule”.

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**Member’s Position**

- Ask for the member’s position on the bill/issue
  - Politics = avoid commitment
  - Lobbying = get commitment
- If member supports the bill/your position
  - Thank them
  - Ask to speak out stating your position of agreement
  - Present facts, statistics, how it affects you/industry
  - Leave materials and your contact information
• **Be Political**
  – Demonstrate connection between what you are requesting and the members of constituency
  – Speak from personal experience
  – Share information and examples that clearly show the impact of the legislation
  
  **ALL POLITICS IS LOCAL!**

• **Be Persuasive**
  – Describe how you, your group can be of assistance – You are the expert
  – Cite specific statistics or evidence to support your views
  – Site pros and cons and why you are right
  – Be prepared to answer questions or provide additional information if the member asks questions or wants more information
  – Be honest – don’t argue
Capitol Hill Visit – The Visit

- Leave your business card & support material
  - Use file folder-preferred by staff-easier to keep
- Get staff business card with contact info
- Thank the person for time and attention- Repeat “The Ask”
- Ask preferred method of contact for follow-up (phone, e-mail)
  - Send personal thank you & info promised ASAP
  - Follow-up on “The Ask” if necessary-wait 2 weeks

The 10 Commandments of Lobbying

I. Have Fun
II. Be Brief
III. Be Defferential
IV. Be Yourself
V. All Politics is Local
VI. Get to the Point
VII. Ask for Member’s Position
VIII. If Member Supports you Stop
IX. Make Many Friends, Few Enemies
X. Credibility is your Greatest Asset
Capitol Hill Visit – The Visit

Congratulate yourself!
You are now an advocate for your profession.

Advocacy in Action!
Advocacy in Action!

[Image of two people in front of a building]

Advocacy in Action!

[Image of the Capitol Building]
Advocacy in Action!
Advocacy in Action!

The Power of Constituency

Go Forth and Advocate!
What Else Can You Do?

- Be part of your industry/organization’s grassroots efforts
- Support your organization’s PAC
- Participate in annual Legislative Symposium sponsored by ASCLS, CLMA and ASCP

Political Action Committee (PAC)

- Permits trade associations or membership organizations to contribute to federal candidates
- Gives collective voice to the lab industry
- Ensure lab’s message is heard
- Provides Access to Member
Clinical Laboratory Coalition (CLC)

- Professional Societies, medical device manufacturers
- ASCP, ASCLS, AAB, AACC, ASM, AMT, ACLA, CAP, CLMA, Quest Diagnostics, AdvaMed, Roche, Ortho Clinical/J&J
- Grassroots support
- Fly-ins, Congressional Briefings
- Advocate on issues of mutual interest

The Power of Constituency

Go Forth and Advocate!