

# GRASSROOTS LOBBYING

Presented by

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## **THREE QUESTIONS:**

- 1. EXPLAIN GRASSROOTS?**
- 2. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?**
- 3. WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?**

**What is grassroots lobbying?**

Grassroots lobbying occurs when citizens communicate with government officials and elected representatives in an effort to influence government decisions.

**Why is grassroots involvement so important?**

1. Citizen involvement in government affairs is a constitutionally protected, essential element of democracy.
2. It enables individuals and interest group to participate in the government to positively influence specific legislation or government actions that benefit your interests.
3. Constituent involvement is essential to respond to a proposed legislative or government actions that threaten your interests.

Grassroots activities include:

Communication with Government officials

1. Call, write, e-mail, fax
2. Meetings
3. Attending events
4. Testimony at hearings

GRASSROOTS GUIDLINES

1. Planning
2. Communication
3. Focus
4. Follow-up

## SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Organization's Web Site

Maryland General Assembly Web Site

## IMPORTANT ISSUES

1. Procurement (QBS)
2. Transportation funding
3. Minority/Small Business Contracting
4. MTA Insurance Requirements
5. Workforce Shortage of Engineers

## RETURN ON INVESTMENT

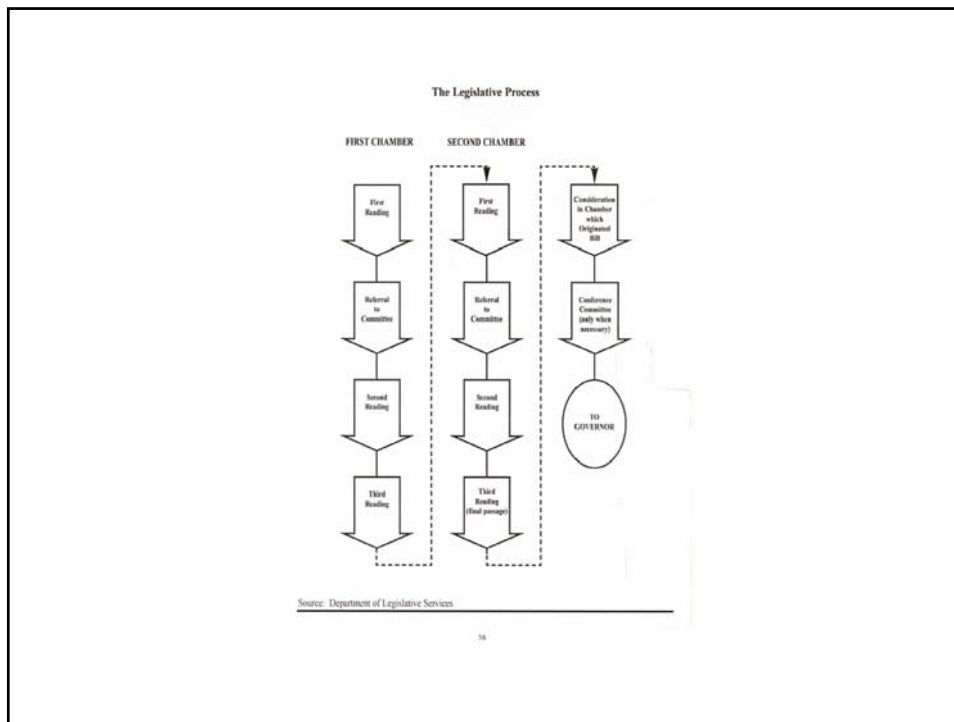
A few hours may return millions of dollars in value to your professional community.

Ancillary benefits (i.e. knowledge and understanding of issues, professional networking, etc.) may more than justify the effort required to support grassroots activities.

Successful business leaders who take the time to become effective grassroots advocates believe the time, expense and effort are worthwhile.

### **What can you do to help ACEC/MD succeed?**

1. Know your elected representatives
2. Incorporate grassroots into management plans
3. Invite elected officials to visit your organization or schedule meetings with representatives
4. Attend legislative hearings in support of the your legislative interests
5. Support elected officials who support your interests



- **GUIDELINES FOR MEETING WITH LEGISLATORS**
- **Preparation**
- Be sure that those attending the meeting understand the purpose and message you wish to convey to the legislator.
- You cannot meet with all 188 members of the General Assembly. So try to focus your attention on “Key” legislators who can best advance your interests. Refer to the Legislative Directory on this web site to find the specific standing committee (subcommittee) responsible for the area of legislation that concerns you.
- Be aware that legislators will avoid the “turf” battles. Conflicts between constituent groups are much more difficult, if not impossible to resolve. Legislators will prefer that you to make a sincere effort to meet with the opposition and ameliorate any issues to the extent possible.
- **Logistics**
- You are busy professionals with appointments and clients who need you. Nevertheless having flexibility in schedules is important so that you can meet with the legislator at his/her convenience. Keep in mind that most legislators either own a business or work at other jobs.
- The legislator will have better chance of getting a meeting within your timeframe if you offer to meet at the their Annapolis or district office.
- The legislator’s scheduler may ask how much time you need.
- Sometime the scheduler will offer a meeting with staff rather than the legislator. In most cases, you should offer to wait for a convenient date to meet with the legislator.
- Legislators in positions of authority may have access to committee staff. You may want to agree to meet with Committee staff if time is an issue.
- **Message**
- Clearly explain the purpose of the meeting and the topic areas.
- Limit the time for introductions but be sure to describe the purpose, size, composition and geographical distribution of your organization (i.e. statewide, number of members, size of combined employment, clients, activities, etc.).
- Limit agenda items. You may only have 20 minutes to an hour, so make the best use of the time available.
- Beware of filibusters! Make sure to keep everyone on point. Some elected officials may be prone to small talk, perhaps to avoid difficult or controversial issues. If possible, share personal stories that elucidate the topic being discussed. Putting a face on the problem can be very effective.

- **GUIDELINES FOR MEETING WITH LEGISLATORS (page 2)**
- **Ask**
- Ask the policy maker for his/her position.
- Solicit reasons/rationales for his/her position. Even if a legislator isn't supportive, you will know more about the issues that you will need to address later.
- Explain why it is important to you that the legislator becomes involved
- Request specific action by legislator, such as sponsoring or co-sponsoring a bill, opposing a bill, speak in support or opposition.
- Be aware of nonverbal communication of legislator or staff.
- Offer to provide additional information.
- **Photo-Op**
- Take of photo of the elected official with your group to publish in your newsletter or a local newspaper with a story about the meeting.
- **De-Brief**
- Share the information you learned with others in your organization.
- What was said, by whom, about what;
- The policy maker's response/reaction/concerns
- Information or assistance that was offered to the elected official and/or staff in response to issues raised.
- **Follow-Up**
- Discuss with your leadership and lobbyist what follow-up is appropriate.
- Assign responsibility and time limits for completion of follow-up.
- **Thank You**
- Use a thank you letter as an opportunity to re-summarize the discussion/major points raised at the meeting and your understanding of the policy maker's position or needs (e.g. more information).

# THANK YOU

