



Steps in Effective Lobbying and Advocacy: How to Impact Policy to Affect Change

Jenifer J. Martin, J.D.

Today's Agenda

- Build skills in government relations
- Review steps in any effective advocacy strategy
- Review tips for working with the media
- Distinguish between education and lobbying activities
- Recognize reporting requirements

Government Relations Role

Objectives:

Develop and direct government relations and advocacy strategies to advance the expertise and interests of UMSPH & IHPI students and faculty among policy stakeholders including the State of Michigan, the U.S. Congress, and the Administration.

Overall Principles

- Success is dependent on both *substance* and *relationships*
- Process expertise
- Broad application
- Etiquette and protocol
- It's not rocket science!

Step 1:

What is your goal?

World Peace?

- Be as clear as possible about what you are asking the policymaker/decisionmaker to do
- If appropriate, include the specific legislation/vehicle that addresses the issue, the lead sponsor, and the timing of future actions

Sample “Ask”

“I’m writing to urge you to cosponsor S. 39, the Healthy Lifestyles and Prevention America Act (HeLP America Act) introduced by Senator Harkin on January 23. The legislation will be considered by the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions on February 20.”

Define Issue and Objective

- Identify issue/problem: Be the expert and serve as a resource
- Understand all sides of the issue, and all arguments, both pro and con

Define Issue and Objective

- Identify advocacy objective, including acceptable alternatives and compromises (short, intermediate, and long term)
- Understand political context, realities, and limitations

Define Issue and Objective

- Develop the “ask”
 - Are you being proactive or reactive?
 - Do you want to take action, or to maintain the status quo?
 - Do you want to change current law?
 - Create a new law?
 - Issue Executive Order?
 - Promulgate regulation?
 - Educate policymakers for future activity?

Define Issue and Objective

- Use your resources to develop a *substantive* policy position (no whining)
- *Use research findings to build your argument – this is how you will distinguish yourself!*

Step 2:
***Who can accomplish
your goal?***

Identify and Understand Target Audience

- Who is the Decisionmaker?
 - Legislation: Not the White House or the Governor!
 - Authorization v. \$\$\$Appropriations\$\$\$
 - Elected Official v. Staff – Understand their respective roles in policymaking (Term limits!)
 - Who influences the Decisionmaker?
 - Media
 - Interest groups
 - Constituents

Identify Champion

- Develop “champion”
 - Two key roles:
 - Investment/commitment of an internal leader
 - Intelligence and info/notice of opposition activities
 - Possible examples might include:
 - Constituent Members
 - Committee jurisdiction
 - State delegations
 - Governors
 - Leadership
 - Caucuses

Build Coalition

- What are other interested stakeholders doing?
- Is there an opportunity to unite around a specific goal?
- Can you include grassroots efforts?
 - Elected officials respond to their constituents

Build Coalition

- Coalition Members Might Include:
 - Trade Associations/Business Related Groups/Unions/Issue Groups/Public Interest Groups/Political Parties
 - Administration: White House/Relevant Agency/Department/OMB/GAO/CBO
 - State Agencies

Step 3:
How will you
communicate your goal?

Develop Message

- Message must be crafted in both substantive and political context
- Understand the players, especially your opposition – who is arguing against you, and why? Include arguments refuting the opposition in your message
- Message might vary for different audiences

Step 4:
**What is the *strategy* to
advance your goal?**

Advance Message

- Cultivate personal relationships
- Conduct in-person, face-to-face meetings
- Provide testimony in public hearings
- Hold briefings/participate in “town hall” meetings
- Invite staff to come to you – visit project, attend events, etc.
- Mail – Write Letters
- Email (reality of post 9-11 security concerns)
- Grassroots efforts/events
- Media: op/ed, place articles strategically
- Social media (Facebook, twitter, blogs)
- Participate in campaign activities

Advocate

- Network
 - Hand out your cards, meet over coffee...
- Build relationships
 - Eye contact, smiles, firm handshake, common sense!
- Thank you, thank you, thank you

Advocate

- Admit when you don't know something, and offer to find the answer
- Integrity, honesty, and respect
- Understand and be considerate of timing, protocol, competing demands
- Check your ego at the door

Advocate

- Who else needs to know what you're doing?
(Avoid surprises)
- Be brief, concise, and to the point!
(8 minute rule)

Advocacy Tools

- Tools of the trade – do the work for them and speak their language:
 - “the leave-behind”
 - “one-pager”
 - “white paper”
 - “policy brief”
 - “fact sheet”
 - Supplement with other compelling documents (NYT editorials, research findings, etc.)

Meeting Essentials

- “Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today”
- Introduce yourself, the organization you represent, and identify the reason for the visit (i.e., specific bill)
- Explain why they should care about your issue (constituent issue, they are a member of a relevant committee with an upcoming vote, etc.)
- Provide information, and address opposing points of view to arm them with answers to likely questions
- Offer to serve as a resource and provide follow up information

Followup

- This is critical!
- Write thank you notes! Get personal stationery and use it! (For Hill staff, be aware of security issues, so use email)
- Offer your assistance, serve as a resource, answer questions, provide information
- Maintain contact and stay in touch

Advocacy Checklist

- What is the problem? (Define issue)
- What do you want to do about it? (Identify goal)
 - Include short, intermediate, and long-term goals/objectives
 - Include acceptable compromises
- Who is the decisionmaker? (Identify and understand target audience (s))
 - Including who influences decisionmaker (relevant media)
- Who can help you achieve your goal (Champion), and who will support/oppose your efforts? (Identify resources and stakeholders, internal and external)
- Can you build a coalition to advance your goal?
- What's your message? (Be aware of political context)
- How will you communicate it? (Develop strategy)
 - (Conduct meetings, write letters, coordinate direct mail campaigns, promote media, grassroots efforts, etc)
- Get it Done – Advocate to Implement Strategy
- Follow up to Maintain Relationships and Build Trust

Working with the Media

- Importance of Control
- Before the Interview: Gain as much information about the interview as possible:
 - What is the main focus of the story?
 - When is the deadline? (Today? Next month?)
 - Who else is being interviewed? (Someone you disagree with?)
 - When will it run? (Do you need to alert anyone?)
 - Why have you been selected to contribute to the story?
- Establish ground rules – on/off the record, on background, not for attribution, etc.

Working with the Media

- Determine your main talking point and summarize the “sound bite” -- What is the single most important thing you want them to remember/learn from you?
- Anticipate likely questions and prepare answers
- Avoid jargon/academic terminology
- Keep it short – modular, self-contained sentences that can be lifted out of the interview and inserted into the story, without explanation

The “Sound Bite”

- Structure in three parts:
 - Very short summary of your main point
 - Elaboration (opportunity to educate, provide detail and context)
 - Short summary at the end of the answer, preceded by the word “so” – this is most likely to be used as the quote/sound bite. Helpful to memorize!

Working with the Media

- Develop a positive relationship with key journalists covering your “beat” – become a resource
- Tell a story/narrative/anecdote
- Give examples to illustrate points
- Study other interviews

Lobbying v. Advocacy: Federal

- Tax-exempt status determines restrictions on certain lobbying activities (but much of public health advocacy does not qualify)
- What is lobbying? Direct v Grassroots
 - *Direct lobbying*: “Any attempt to influence legislation through communication with legislators, staff persons, or any other government official who participates in the formulation of legislation where the communication (1) refers to specific legislation and (2) reflects a view on the legislation.” 26 CFR S 56.4911-2(b)
 - *Grassroots lobbying*: “Any attempt to influence any legislation through an attempt to influence the opinions of the general public or any segment thereof.” 26 CFR S 56.4911-2(b) Must (1) refer to specific legislation, (2) reflect a view on the legislation, and (3) include a “call to action.”

Lobbying v. Advocacy: Federal

How much lobbying is permitted?

- “Insubstantial Part” Test – approximately 5% of an organization’s total efforts

OR

- “Expenditure” Test – for the first \$500,000 of an organization’s tax-exempt expenditures, a total of 20% (\$100,000) may be spent on all lobbying activities; no more than 5% of the \$500,000 (\$25,000) may be spent on grassroots lobbying

Reporting Requirements: MI

- Definition of Lobbying: “*any direct contact with a lobbyable public official, whether face to face, by telephone, letter, electronic media or any other means, the purpose of which is to influence the official’s legislative or administrative actions.*”
- Who is “lobbyable?” (www.michigan.gov/sos)
- Organization/Individual must register if more than \$2,000 is spent to lobby *a number of* public officials, or in excess of \$500 to lobby *a single* public official in a 12-month period.

Questions, ideas or
feedback?

martinjj@umich.edu

