

**CS-ACM Spring '13 Regional Conference Workshop:
Speaking With Your Legislator**

Presenters: Hap Haasch, Executive Director, Public Media Network (Kalamazoo, MI) Beth Lock, Lobbyist, Allen County Board of Commissioners

Part 1 - FRAMEWORK:

"Advocacy" = is a political process by an individual or group which aims to influence public policy and resource allocation decisions within political, economic, social systems, and institutions. Advocacy can include many activities, including:

- Media campaigns
- Public speaking
- Commissioning/publishing research Filing amicus briefs

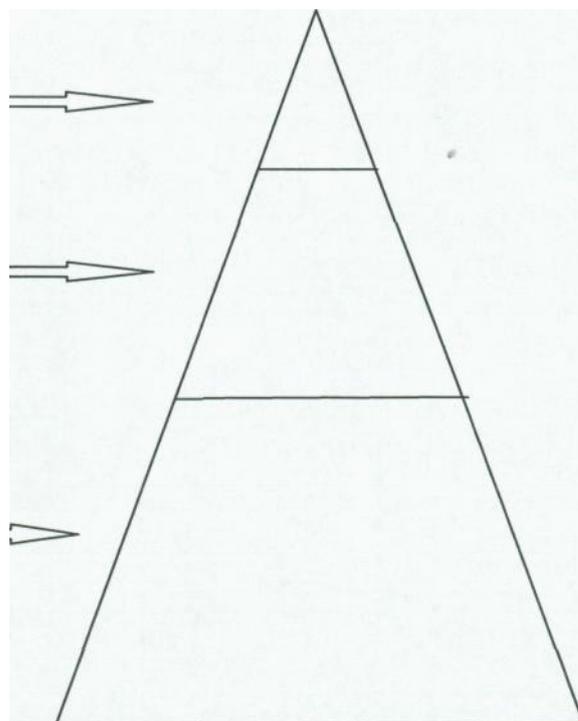
"Lobbying" = is *a form* of advocacy where a direct approach is made to legislators on an issue. This can be done in informal meetings with legislators or their staff, or in more formal committee hearings.

NOTE TO COMMUNITY MEDIA PROFESSIONALS: *The activity described above IS NOT something that normally appears in our job descriptions, or something we typically think of when we get into this thing we do. THAT MUST CHANGE!*

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT
FCC & CONGRESS

STATE
LEGISLATURES AND
REGULATORY
AGENCIES

LOCAL
GOVERNMENT-CITY &
COUNTY COUNCILS AND
COMMISSIONS



Part 2 - RELATIONSHIPS AND MESSAGING:

Start Local: All PEG/CMCs have some level of relationship with local elected officials - if you didn't you would probably not exist. Cultivate and build on these relationships before venturing into state and federal arenas.

Associations: Municipal organizations (MML and MTA in Michigan, IACT in Indiana) are a GREAT RESOURCE and you MUST pay attention and work with them. They have hundreds of issues to deal with - we must respect that.

State Legislators: Often, state legislators got their start in public office at the local level - on school boards, city councils, county commissions etc. Research this and leverage the link - hopefully your PEG/CMC is seen as a valuable community asset and a former local elected official will remember this. These contacts can be INVALUABLE as recon sources for what kinds of legislation might be in development that would affect you. A simple, short visit every once in a while to say hello and ask about what is being said around the hallways is a good idea.

Congressional Representatives: Know who they are...! Know where the local office(s) are and visit them! Introduce yourself, meet the people who might be able to help you when a federal issue is percolating.

Your "Elevator Speech": A concise - tight - well rehearsed verbal statement of who you are and what your organization does. TEST - can you do this in (1) minute?

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EXERCISE TIME! A legislative aide in your state representative's office has two minutes with you in a hallway before a big committee hearing...seems to like you and be interested in what you have to say (even if this is just good acting):

"Tell me about your organization?" - you got one minute. "What is the

issue you have with AT&T?" - you got one minute

DRAFT AND REHEARSE THIS TYPE OF STATEMENT - KEEP IT SIMPLE AND BASIC, MAYBE WITH A NICE "HOOK" THAT INVITES FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS AND CONVERSATION.

Part 3 - FOOTWORK:

"Lit Drops": Your PEG/CMC or the ACM might publish a concise collection of information about an issue they are advocating on...background on issue, number of CMC's affected, proposed process or solutions, contact resources etc.

You could mail it to every member of the state legislature... OR ... do a "lit drop":

Personally visit each and every office in your state legislature (or Congress!).
Introduce yourself to the office receptionist/staffer.
Ask to leave an informational package for the legislative aide that might handle your issue (telecommunication).
Ask for the name/business card of the appropriate legislative aide to contact.
Ask "could I call or email Sally Smith to set up an appointment to talk about the poor signal quality at&t provides for our community channels?".
Say thank you and leave OR get invited to have the discussion on the spot.
Save all of the business cards and create a database of contacts for future reference.

This may seem like a waste of time, but a lit drop accomplishes several things:

Gets you off your butt and into the mix.

Gives you a chance to learn the basic landscape of your legislature - where the offices and meeting rooms are.

Creates a comfort level when entering this environment.

Committee Hearings:

Know what committees might get telecommunication issues

Get list of committee members

ATTEND AT LEAST ONE COMMITTEE MEETING WHEN YOU HAVE NO ISSUE - JUST

SIT, LISTEN, AND LEARN! This is called "recon"!

Carefully prepare public commentary/remarks - REHEARSE - practice taking tough questions. We don't prepare nearly enough for this activity.