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NRHA Policy Institute

How to Educate Elected Officials



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“Our system depends upon the fullest participation of all its citizens.”

–Robert F. Kennedy





“If you would persuade, you must appeal to interest rather than intellect.”

- Benjamin Franklin



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Understanding the
Legislative Process



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Educating Elected Officials



Goal of Educating Elected Officials

Attempting to influence the passage, defeat or content of legislation by individuals or a group.



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You Are:

1 part Advocate

1 part Educator

1 part Salesperson



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When is an effort to persuade considered
“lobbying” versus “educating”?

Does it make a difference?



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Meetings with Senators and
Representatives and or staff?



Office Structure

Chief of Staff

Legislative Director

Legislative Assistant/Fellow

Legislative Correspondent

Intern



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Communicating With Elected Officials



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Ten rules for effective visits with Elected Officials

Gary Hymel (former aide to Speaker Tip O'Neill)



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1. Keep it short.
2. Know the arguments on both sides.
3. Document your position. Prepare a summary and supporting papers you can leave behind.



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4. Promise (and keep your promise) to supply answers and documents requested.
5. Never threaten.
6. If you see a member alone, make sure you follow-up with a staffer.



7. Tell them who your allies are, if you have any.
8. Tell them why the elected official might be interested in your position, from a local or issue-related point of view (more jobs, better jobs, safer jobs, did I mention jobs).
9. If they agree, leave soon.



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10. Always say please and always say thank you. The basic rules of courtesy apply.



Why does the federal government have to provide support for the STATE office of rural health?



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- What does this mean for the folks back home?
- How does this money translate into:
 - Improved access to care
 - Improved quality of care
 - Lower cost of healthcare



1. Stay Focused
2. Know What you Know. If you don't know it, don't make it up.
3. Follow-up, Follow-up, Follow-up!
4. Don't forget the "ask"



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Whenever possible, you should have
“leave behinds”



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Issue memos should never be more than 1 page (both sides). They should include:

- * One/two sentence statement about the problem
- * Background information on the problem
- * A discussion of the issue
- * A recommendation of action the Congressional office can take.



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1. PERSONAL e-mail
2. PERSONAL Letter
3. Form Letter
4. Petition
5. Other – Phone call, telegram (mass communication)



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E-mail

It is imperative that you indicate in the e-mail your regular postal address so the office knows you are a **CONSTITUENT!**



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Go Forth and Educate!

