

10 Tips For Businesses on "Grassroots Lobbying"

1. **Appoint a Company Political Coordinator** -- Every company should designate a senior executive to be responsible for ensuring that an in-house political contacts program is put in place. This program's goal should be to establish and maintain good personal relationships with the Senators and Representatives in all states where the company has its home office and/or facilities and operations. This individual also can serve as the political liaison with industry trade groups' lobbyists and your Washington lobbyists.
2. **Visit Your Congressmen and Senators In The State(s)** – Congressmen and Senators have local offices and typically meet with many constituent groups there when they are not in Washington. Call their local staff and schedule a "get acquainted" or "industry update" meeting with these elected officials when they are back in the state. Review their biography, which is usually available via the Congressional web sites, so that you will know something about the Member, their Committees and positions on major issues. Also, don't overlook the importance of getting to know the top staff in these officials' local offices. Treat their staff to a lunch or dinner and tell them about your company and the industry.
3. **Provide Educational Materials** – Prepare at least a brief one or two page paper on your own company's operations; be sure to comment on your employees and the numbers/volume of loans the company makes. Don't forget to point out the positive economic and community benefits your company provides. If you have Washington lobbyists, contact them and obtain additional background information on the industry and its legislative positions. Include this in the information package that you give the officeholders and their staffs.
4. **Invite Them To Visit** – Invite both the Members and their staff to come visit your facilities and to meet and speak to your employees. Be sure to have photographs taken and try to have a story run in your local paper. Then, send them the news clip---most relish any positive publicity.
5. **Find Other Opportunities To Meet Members & To Maintain Contacts** – Local organizations often have their Senators and Representatives speak at luncheons and other gatherings. Many Members also frequently schedule "Town Hall Meetings" where any area citizens can talk with them. Look for such events in your area and go, or have someone from your company attend, and talk with the Member, mentioning your company. Send a follow-up letter to them after any personal discussion. Also, send them a letter at least several times a year commending them for some position they have taken, even if it does not relate specifically to your business. Members need to know that you are paying attention to what they are doing and that you care.
6. **Project A "Good Corporate Citizen" Image In Your Community** – Sponsor and support charitable and public service causes in your own community. Be visible and active in such efforts.
7. **Support Your Senators & Representatives Through Campaign Contributions** – Almost all Senate and House Members are faced with expensive reelection campaigns, and they are constantly raising campaign contributions. If you hear of a political fund raising event being held for them in your area, attend and make a personal contribution. Offer to personally host a fund raising event for the Member at a later date. Sponsoring such an event usually does wonders in building up your relationship.
8. **Volunteer To Help In Their Campaigns** – In addition to fund raising, there are often many things that individuals can volunteer to do to help support a Senator or Representative in their reelection efforts. Contact them and ask how you can help.
9. **Team Up With Other Industry Members** – Arrange to have an annual briefing or meeting with the Member and a group of senior industry executives in your state if they have similar interests. It's important for the Member to see that your industry has many firms in their area.

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- 10. Visit Your Senators & Representatives During Your Association's Washington Legislative Conference** – Participate in the periodic Washington Legislative Conferences sponsored by any national trade association that you belong to and schedule update meetings with your Members during that time. Let Members see that the industry is organized and working together and that his or her local constituent companies care enough to come here to lobby on issues.

If your company and others undertake basic local government and public relations efforts such as those suggested in the preceding tips, the political effect will be dramatic. It will mean that this industry will have taken a giant step toward having the “grassroots” political clout necessary to effectively influence Congress on the issues of critical importance to your business.

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Please direct any questions on grassroots lobbying matters or other legislative issues to:

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