



# Building Relationships with Elected Officials

A PRESENTATION



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**First Vice-Chairman, House Committee on Finance**  
**Member, House Finance Subcommittee on General Government**  
**Member, House Committee on Labor**  
**Member, House Committee on Rules**

**Former Chairman of the Bristol Town Council**

# Who Are YOU



- ★ What are your Core beliefs
- ★ What is your motivation
- ★ Are you really a team player
- ★ What are your passions
- ★ Are you a creative thinker
- ★ Can you easily admit you made a mistake
- ★ Can you share accomplishments and credit

# Goals and Objectives



## ➤ What do you want to accomplish & why

1. Define your vision
2. Who will benefit
3. Likely partners – the more the merrier
4. Strength is conveyed in numbers

## ➤ Politics is about relationships

1. Make yourself aware of all your politicians and their staff
2. Family Friends Interests Platforms
3. They are Public Servants – they chose this to do good for there communities.

“Make friends when you don’t need them so that you will have them when you do need them.” . . .Lyndon Johnson



- Write a congratulatory letter to newly elected officials
- Know their backgrounds, committees on which they serve, what they did before running for office.
- Become familiar with their views (Platforms)
- Genuinely take an interest in helping them fulfill their goals
- DON'T be a telemarketer (they will hang up on you in many different ways)

- Be at events where you know they will be in attendance
- Invite them to be at your programs and involve them.
- Then give them all the credit – you don't need credit or votes – They do!
- Send the elected official and the staff member who accompanies them a follow up note, thanking them for the visit



You can catch more flies with honey than you can with a fly swatter

- The more partners you have the more success you will find
- Don't get stuck – mix it up – show your personality – laugh - tell a few jokes - relax
- ALL WAYS be positive, don't let yourself get a negative reputation. It will spread like wildfire.
- Look for the “Win – Win” solution
- Remember there is always a desirable solution to your problem.
- Build on successes



**“You can get anything you want in life if you just help enough other people get what they want.”**





# Do's and Don'ts

## Do's

- Clearly identify the subject of interest, including current House and Senate bill numbers if applicable to the discussion
- Explain your connection to the issue and its impact on you, their community, or health
- Write legibly and concisely
- Try to determine the Member's position [or likely position] on similar issues
- Use personal experiences in outlining your position and concerns
- Use your own business or personal stationary
- Communicate actively when legislation is under consideration in a committee, conference or on the floor of the House or Senate
- Write more than once on the same issue, especially if the legislation or activity changes (favorably or otherwise) and note what impact those changes will have
- Write to the appropriate committee and subcommittee chairmen responsible for the legislation when you have information that will help the committees' deliberations (copy your representative and/or senators as appropriate)

## Don'ts

- Be rude or threatening
- Promise something you cannot deliver
- Be self-righteous or overbearing
- Pretend to have more influence or power than you truly have
- Be vague about the issue – present facts that can support or refute the Member's position or responses.
- Forget to thank the Member for past assistance and support
- Bring up past campaign contributions or present a check during a meeting (this should be restricted to specific fundraising events]



# Politicians

Have families and friends and do what they do for very little compensation. Their motivation is love of community and RI



- ✓ **Generally have no formal training for their governmental positions**
- ✓ **They are fast learners and very intuitive**
- ✓ **Tend to be short term focused**
- ✓ **But have long term focused interests – environmental – jobs – economic development – education etc. etc.**
- ✓ **They are multi-taskers – They can focus on more than one issue**
- ✓ **Serve the interests of those who elected them**

- ✓ **Don't like to be surprised or embarrassed**
- ✓ **Expect us to be problem solvers**
- ✓ **Don't like technical jargon**
- ✓ **Want to be informed on an ongoing bases**
- ✓ **Should be appreciated – thanked and credited**
- ✓ **They like “White Papers” with bullets**
- ✓ **Held accountable by voters**



# Remember...

- ✚ Positive messages work - so be positive!
- ✚ Connect to your core values and explain why is it so important to you, your family, your city and/or your state.
- ✚ Listen; Listen; Listen
- ✚ Be the “Go To” guy

## Reasons to be hopeful!

- ✚ You can make a difference.
- ✚ People working together can make a difference.
- ✚ People can change laws/policies.
- ✚ Advocacy is an American tradition.
- ✚ Advocacy helps find real solutions.
- ✚ Policymakers need your expertise.
- ✚ Advocacy helps people.

