How to Guide on Grassroots Lobbying

1. What is Grassroots Lobbying?
   - Grassroots lobbying is when citizens contact their own legislators to try to influence legislation and policy. Advocacy groups of all kinds engage in grassroots lobbying, asking their members to call and write their legislators about a piece of legislation.
     - You, an everyday citizen, can have a huge impact on legislative issues
   - A call-to-action is a great example of grassroots lobbying; a call-to-action is when participants are urged to take immediate action on a specific issue, such as contact their legislator, or write an email. We use these at CCIM Institute on important and time-sensitive issues such as carried interest.

2. Know your legislators
   - Spend a day researching your elected officials
     - Google.com
     - Look for .gov websites to ensure you are finding correct and authentic information (Ohio.gov, Illinois.gov, etc)
   - Find out who your local legislators are:
     - State assemblymen and women
     - Aldermen
     - Council Members
     - Congressional members – know where their district offices are located, perhaps find out staffers

3. Make contact
   - Reach out to your legislator by making a phone call or writing a letter
   - Best choice of all, schedule a face-to-face meeting
   - Invite them to your chapter meeting or an industry event – this will allow them to have a better understanding of what you do
   - Be on mailing list

4. When you meet
   - Take the time to be prepared for the meeting, don’t go into it “cold”
   - Research the issue or issues you are discussing with your legislator –
     - they will most definitely ask you questions about your issue
     - come with numbers – legislators ALWAYS want to know the quantitative side of an issue because if they agree to move forward with the issue, they themselves will get grilled on the numbers
     - does it cost anything, how much, how much can it save taxpayers, etc.
     - Have professional looking and well-organized “leave be hind s”
       - Pamphlet that explains issue
       - Business card
     - Don’t be afraid to “make the ask” and request a look into your issue – this is how legislation is made, how bills come to be enacted – by concerned and involved citizens like yourself
     - Use your network. If you know someone who has a relationship with a legislator, meet up with him or her and explain your situation
   - Get your chapter involved – this is where the “grassroots” aspect comes into play
Hold a special meeting to inform your chapter of the issue at hand and the importance of their involvement

Inquire if anyone has any connections to the respective legislator
  • Take a survey of chapter members and record who knows who so you can have this information on hand when you need it

Hold an annual “Day at the Statehouse”
  • Great opportunity for local members to get excited about the grassroots lobbying process
  • The legislator can also get to better understand your industry’s needs
  • Strength in numbers! The legislator will also see that you are a strong group of professionals that are also his constituents

Understand the process
  • If a bill already exists, do your research on where the bill is in the process
  • Find out committee hearings, attend them
  • If appropriate, speak at the hearings
  • Be a resource
    • Let the legislator know you “know your stuff” and that he can contact you for information and input

Stay connected to the legislator
  • Have your members make regular contact with him/her
  • Write letters, emails
  • Invite the legislator out to a meeting or social event
    • Remember any spending limits on food/drinks that the legislator may have

Don’t be shy – you are the constituency and your issues matter!
  • Elected officials want to know how you feel – positive or negative

Last but not least, have fun! It may sound very intimidating, but some very “ordinary” citizens have done some very “extraordinary” things by getting involved.

Remember this is an exciting and fun process, so dig in!