Grassroots Advocacy

How to Gain Influence on Capitol Hill
What is Grassroots Advocacy?

• Efforts to influence legislators and government officials through citizen mobilization/participation, including:
  – Educating and building awareness around an issue
  – Supporting or opposing specific legislation/regulations
  – Personalizing and localizing an issue
  – Generating local media attention
Why is Grassroots Advocacy Effective?

- Constituents participate
  - Vote for elected officials
  - May have personal/professional connections with the member or his/her staff
  - Know the district
  - Can tell personal stories
  - Complement lobbyists
Congress

• 535 total members: 435 Representatives, 100 Senators
• House members serve two-year terms; Senators serve six-year terms
• www.House.gov or www.Senate.gov to determine your Members of Congress

• Visit their website for contact information (District and Washington, DC)
115th Congress: 2017-2019

U.S. Senate

U.S. House

218 Needed for Majority

Democrats  Republicans  Independents
Bill Making Process

Introduction & Referral

Committee Review & Action

Floor Debate & Passage

Presidential Approval
Grassroots Tactics to Influence Congress

- Send an e-mail or letter
- Make a phone call
- Schedule an in-person meeting on Capitol Hill or in District Office
- Attend town hall meetings and local public events
- Engage via social media
- Write op-eds or letters to the editor of local papers
- Invite a member to your plant or business
Communicating with Congress

• Identify yourself as a constituent and your reason for contacting
• Be prepared (know your facts) and concise
• Personalize your message and stress the local implications of an issue (ie. Number of employees, facilities in district, etc.)
• Specify request – Your “ask” (support or oppose a bill, etc.)
• Be respectful and express appreciation
# Message Features and Impact

## Constituent Messages That Include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constituent Messages That Include:</th>
<th>Level of Influence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bill number and title</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information about the impact the bill would have on the district or state</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific reasons for supporting/opposing the bill or issue</td>
<td>90%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reference to specific legislation (bill number)</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific, single request or “ask”</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal story related to the bill or issue</td>
<td>79%</td>
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Most Effective Influences on Congress

- In-Person Issue Visits from Constituents: 94%
- Contact from Constituents' Reps: 94%
- Individualized Email Messages: 92%
- Individualized Postal Letters: 88%
- Local Editorial Referencing Issue Pending: 87%
- Comments During Telephone Town Hall: 86%
- Phone Calls: 84%
- Letter to the Editor Referencing Your Boss: 83%
- Visit From a Lobbyist: 83%
- Form Email Messages: 56%
- Groups Social Media Platforms: 51%
- Your Office's Social Media Platforms: 50%
- Form Postal Letters: 50%
- Petitions: 49%
- Postcards: 42%

A Lot of Positive Influence
Some Positive Influence
In-person Meeting

• Make the request in writing
  – Explain connection to district/state
  – Mention what you plan to discuss and a list of potential attendees
  – Propose a date and time

• Follow up with a phone call to the scheduler

• Prepare
In-person Meeting: What to Expect

- Be prompt and patient
- Often meet with staff who handle your issue area
- Make a specific, clear “ask” and tell a personal story
- Don’t make up information if you can’t answer a question
- Develop material to leave behind (one-page summary of your message and request)
- Follow up (written thank you to office with answers to any questions; reiterate ask and main points; request reply)
Influencing Federal Regulations

• Executive branch (agencies and departments) translate law into policy
• Proposed regulations will be published in the *Federal Register*: [https://www.regulations.gov/](https://www.regulations.gov/)
• Meat Institute members interested in those regulations can submit comments within a specified period
• Ask member of Congress to send letter to federal agency about a particular action
A Note on Social Media

• Less volume is needed to generate a response
• Improves relationship between lawmakers and constituents
• Interactions can be viewed as authentic, but personalization still key
• Seen as barometer of public opinion
Using Social Media to Communicate with Congress

- Follow your members’ social media accounts (effective for monitoring their views and actions)
- Tag the member in tweets and Facebook posts
- Have a conversation – respond to members seeking input on relevant issues
- Ensure posts are respectful and informative
Setting up a Site Visit

- Invite Congressional staff, House member, and/or Senators to visit your facility/plant
- Awareness/education (food safety, sanitation, production practices; inspection-related concerns, etc.)
- Make a plan
- Communicate logistics to the member’s staff coordinating the visit (including any protective wear or safety precautions that will be taken)
- Consider inviting media/photo opportunities
- Send a thank you
Generating Local Media Attention

• Maintain a list of daily, weekly, and other local newspapers/online publications that accept op-eds and letters to the editor (good visuals may attract local TV station)

• Letters to the editor and op-eds are typically short pieces (150-700 words)

• Monitor stories on topics relevant to your issue
Meat Institute Grassroots Action Center

- Votility software
- Find your legislator, customize letters to Congress and agency officials
- Grassroots 101 Guide in development
- Plant tour guide in development
Members of Congress, particularly those in the House of Representatives, are often concerned about re-election and care about the impact of policies on their districts and states. Constituents, individuals residing in a lawmaker’s district or state, make the best advocates because they are able to personalize and localize issues in ways that connect with their representatives. Constituents know the districts and states in which they live, and may have cultivated relationships with a member and his or her staff. Most importantly, constituents vote for elected officials and can determine whether a member keeps his or her seat in government.

PLEASE FILL OUT AND SUBMIT THE FORM BELOW.

Subject: Letters to Congress

Message: The Meat Institute will let users know when there is an active issue. Content will be provided so that you only have to customize the message. Your zip code is used to identify your Senators and/or Representative, and your letter is sent directly to them.

Add to the Message:

Prefix:
Sources

• Public Affairs Council, http://pac.org/trust-me-the-key-to-grassroots-advocacy/
• Venable LLP, https://www.venable.com/files/Publication/4c7863b4-df5d-4070-9852-69ad40fdd4ee/Presentation/PublicationAttachment/0e150d1a-182f-4e4a-8cb2-715deda2814f/Govt_Political_Law_Grassroots_Primer_Summer_2011.pdf
• National Court Reporters Association, http://www.ncra.org/Government/content.cfm?ItemNumber=9359
• The Leadership Conference Education Fund, Grassroots Campaigns & Advocacy
• The Influence Game, Stephanie Vance
Thank You

• Questions?
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