



Communicating Legislative Messages on the Hill and Beyond



Objectives

- Learn effective communication methods
- Practice effective communication methods
- Prepare for Hill visits



Effective Legislative Communication

- Keep it Local
- Keep it Personal
- Keep it Concise
- Put it in Writing



Visiting the Legislator's Office

- Make an appointment
- Embrace opportunity to meet with staffer
- Explain who you are...simply
- Seek advice on how you can help develop support for your issue



Visiting the Legislator's Office

- Present issue from legislator's perspective
- Use time wisely
- Respond to known arguments
- Admit ignorance; promise answers





Visiting the Legislator's Office

- Agree to disagree if necessary; politely present your case
- Ask for specific action; seek response or commitment
- After the meeting, ask someone to take a photo of you and your legislator
- Follow up

Visiting the Legislators' Office

Keep in mind...

- You know more about conservation than your legislator
- Legislators work for you
- You are an information resource for legislators



Prepare for Your Visit

Develop your message outline:

- A. Opening
- B. Body
- C. Conclusion



The Written Piece

- Provides readily available record for staffer or legislator
- Similar to a Fact Sheet
- Contains brief description of issue(s), why they're important, and action you want legislator to take



The Written Piece

- How many pages?
- Bring plenty of copies. At least one for the staffer and one for the legislator.
- Distribute at the end of the meeting.
- Include your contact information



Edit the Written Piece

- Your written piece should include:
 - A brief description of the issue
 - Why the issue is important
 - Action you want legislator to take
 - Keep it simple



Body Language

Guess the Meaning

Handshake Rating



Follow Up

- If you follow up, you'll get what you want 90% of the time.
- If you don't follow up, you'll get what you want less than 50% of the time.



Follow Up—Media Style

- Send a photo of you and your legislator to the local paper.
- Include a press release describing the purpose of your visit.
- Send a copy of the photo and press release to your legislator



The Power of “Thanks”


An effective thank you note:

- Is hand written and legible.
- Briefly reiterates your issue.
- Requests specific action or response.
- Thanks the legislator for his or her time and consideration.






Addressing Your Note



The Honorable John Doe
House of Representatives
201 West Capitol Avenue
Jefferson City, MO 65102



Dear Representative Doe:



The Honorable Jane Doe
Missouri Senate
201 West Capitol Avenue
Jefferson City, MO 65102

Dear Senator Doe:

Summary—Face to Face with Your Legislator

- Make the little time you have count
- Prepare yourself
- Ask for response, commitment, or action
- Capitalize on media opportunities
- Make the written piece great
- Follow up



Summary—Your Ongoing Relationship

- Meet face to face a couple times a year
- Get to know staffers
- Ask how you can assist your legislator
- Invite legislator to your events; ask him/her to speak
- Stay in contact with hand written notes and letters
- Thank your legislator often

