

How to Effectively Influence Congress Without Leaving Home



Presented by:

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How to Effectively Influence Congress Without Leaving Home

- The trend in effective lobbying is “grassroots” participation. This is basically people expressing themselves from their home or office on matters affecting their world.

How to Effectively Influence Congress Without Leaving Home

- Nature abhors a vacuum
 - Saying nothing just invites the other perspective to speak up...
- Getting the “message” out is critical in influencing Congress.

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- Preparation
 - Know the Issue
 - Know the Member
 - Know the Key dates for Action
 - Know how they vote
- How???

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The screenshot shows a Windows Internet Explorer browser window displaying the NACO website. The address bar shows the URL <http://capwiz.com/naco/home/>. The browser's menu bar includes File, Edit, View, Favorites, Tools, and Help. The website header features the NACO logo with the tagline "The Voice of America's Counties" and navigation links for HOME, JOIN NACO, SITEMAP, and CONTACT US. A search bar is also present. The main navigation menu includes About Counties, About NACO, Conferences & Events, Issues & Interest Areas (highlighted), County Resource Center, and News Room. The "Issues & Interest Areas" section is active, showing a "Legislative Action Center" sidebar and a main content area with a "FEATURED ALERT" titled "DOE Publishes Draft Monthly Reporting Guidelines for EECBG". The alert text discusses the Department of Energy's proposed reporting requirements for the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant program. Below the alert, there are sections for "Legislative Alerts and Updates" and "Policy Tools".



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THOMAS (Library of Congress) - Windows Internet Explorer

http://thomas.loc.gov/

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Award crafters

THOMAS (Library of...

Site Pages - Default

The LIBRARY of CONGRESS THOMAS

The Library of Congress > THOMAS Home

THOMAS
In the spirit of Thomas Jefferson, legislative information from the Library of Congress

- THOMAS Home
- About THOMAS
- Bills, Resolutions
- Congressional Record
- Presidential Nominations
- Treaties
- Committee Reports
- Government Resources
- For Teachers
- Help

House of Representatives

Senate

U.S. Code

Related Resources at the Library

- Law Library of Congress
- Century of Lawmaking
- Continental Congress and Constitutional Convention
- Related Webcasts from the Library

THOMAS
Emergency Economic Stabilization Act (H.R. 1424), final text: [HTML](#) | [GPO PDF](#)

Explore new features that we are working on and let us know what you think!

Legislation in Current Congress

Search Bill Text

SEARCH

Word/Phrase Bill Number

Browse Bills by Sponsor

Select a Representative

Select a Senator

Find More Legislation

- Search Multiple, Previous Congresses
- Appropriations Bills
- Public Laws

Current Activity

- Yesterday in Congress
- Congressional Record Latest Daily Digest
- On the House Floor Now
- Schedules, Calendars

Learn

- The Supreme Court
- The Legislative Process
- Declaration of Independence
- U.S. Constitution
- Constitution Day (Sept. 17)
- More historical documents

Features

[+] FEEDBACK

start

Inbox - Microsof...

THOMAS (Librar...

Influence2008 [...]

Internet

100%

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- Chain Letter – My “Influence Pyramid”
 - “Kitchen Cabinet” – “Viral Marketing”
 - All county officials know people in the community
 - People you trust and know well, that will share your views
 - They know people too...
 - As do those... and so on, and so on...

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- Diversity
 - People
 - The butcher, baker, candlestick maker, lawyer, etc.
 - Message
 - More than one perspective to address the same concern

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- Relationships
 - Get to Know Staff and their roles
 - Chief of Staff, Scheduler, Leg. Director.
 - Both in the District, and in the D.C. office
 - Visit *Their* Office

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- Relationships (cont.)
 - Attend *Their* Public Meetings
 - Invite Them to *Your* facility
 - Catch ‘em at Home!
 - Members do schedule appointments when back in the district

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- Your Style Matters...
 - Be Brief, Be Succinct
 - K.I.S.S. Keep it simple stupid
 - Don't clutter the message with extraneous information
 - Don't Tirade, Be Civil
 - You may be angry, but it will diminish your effectiveness

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- “Going Postal” ...
 - Regular Mail
 - Slowest form of communication
 - Always include your address and use letterhead if possible
 - Don't use form letters
 - Other Services
 - FedEx, UPS Next Day Air, Priority Mail
 - Faster, but not more effective
 - Not as effective post-911
- Valentine's Day

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- Voice

- Mobile phone? Yeah, you've got one...
- Calls During the Workday...
 - Learn the District and D.C. Office Numbers
 - They're available House & Senate websites, or call...
 - The Capitol Switchboard
 - 202/224-3121
 - Be willing to talk to staff

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– Voice Mail After Hours

- Call the direct office line
 - Available on the House and Senate websites
- Be Brief, Succinct, Don't Ramble
- Leave your name, address (with Zip Code) and phone number – email address too!

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- Electronic

- Fax

- Used to be the best communication to D.C. office, not anymore.
 - K.I.S.S! Stick to one message
 - Timing is everything -- use after hours!
 - Use Letterhead

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- Electronic (cont.)
 - Email
 - Include your address and Zip Code
 - They only read email from the state/district
 - Find out staff email addresses – Members don't use it for public interaction
 - House: firstname.lastname@mail.house.gov
 - Senate: firstname_lastname@senator.senate.gov
 - Any time -- day or night

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- Electronic (cont.)
 - Internet
 - Use it to get information
 - Use email services from NACo's website.
 - Web forms on the individual member sites

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- Electronic (cont.)

Social Networks and Web 2.0

- ✓ *Greater Presence*: By being ‘where the eyes are’ you can request grassroots action and at the same time direct people back to your web space (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc).
- ✓ *Dynamic Relationships*: Create an interactive environment around your cause, not just static awareness for your group.
- ✓ *Mashable Information*: Use multiple forms of Web 2.0 technology simultaneously to reach a broader audience on a deeper level (maps, video, photos, widgets, etc).
- ✓ *Influence Pyramid*: Find similar membership/advocacy organizations/individuals to leverage your work and build visibility for the value you bring to the table.

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- Electronic (cont.)

Useful Resources for the Socially-Minded

Policies and Procedures:

- <http://govsocmed.pbworks.com/Web-2-0-Governance-Policies-and-Best-Practices>
- <http://socialmediagovernance.com/policies.php>

Helpful Guides:

- <http://mashable.com/2010/01/02/how-to-guide-2010/>
- http://docs.google.com/View?id=dd4zw7wf_23dtskx6gg
- <http://capitoladvantage.com/actionalerts>

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- Use the media...
 - “Public opinion affects legislative opinion.”
 - Write letters to the editor, opinion/editorials.
 - Use the member of Congress’ name if possible
 - Hold press conferences
 - Arrange editorial board meetings

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- Using the District/State office
 - Local issues, Local solutions
 - For these matters, this is the place!
 - Many federal agencies have local offices
 - Know the caseworkers and their role

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- Using the District/State office (cont.)
 - Use the staff to help influence the Hill
 - Well established contacts with district staff can be used as a conduit to the D.C. staff and Member
 - Use the staff to arrange appointments
 - A good relationship with district staff can provide access to the Member and D.C. staff when the opportunity presents itself

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- Things to remember
 - Power and Advocacy:
 - Influencing legislators is a function of “power”.
 - Projecting “power” enhances advocacy.
 - Legislators respect “power”.
 - “Power” is not given, it is built.
 - Building “power” comes from effective development of the client base.
 - Showing your strength from home adds to the impression of your “power”.

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- More Things to remember
 - “Where you stand depends on where you sit.”
 - Know your allies
 - Know your enemies
 - Who are you dealing with?
 - Know your Member

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- More Things to remember
 - Make a Self Assessment...
 - Know yourself, and your abilities
 - Assess the political climate...
 - Know the institutional mood that may effect your capacity to make a difference

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- Some Important Lobbying Axioms to Remember...
 - “Honesty is not the best policy... it is the only policy !!”
 - “You don’t make peace by talking to your allies”
 - “Remember, today’s opponent may be tomorrow’s ally.”
 - “Always be civil, no matter how irritating the opponents may appear to be .”

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- Some Important Lobbying Axioms to Remember... (cont.)
 - “The number one no-no in legislative relations is to circumvent staff and only talk to the Member.”
 - “Legislative staff can seem uninformed”
 - but, so can an 800 lb. gorilla -- you don't want to rile either one !!
 - Don't forget to close!

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- Make the effort
- Don't be Afraid or Intimidated
- Get Others Involved
- Be Creative
- Be Visible
- Be Tenacious -- Follow-up!!!
- Thank them!

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You really can make a difference and effectively influence Congress from your home or office -- it's the new trend in lobbying. *Be a part of it!*