How to Be An Effective Groundwater Advocate

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Today's Objectives
• WHY: Making the case for member engagement in advocacy
• HOW: Overview of the basics of grassroots advocacy
• WHAT: Opportunities offered to get engaged

Making the Case for Grassroots Engagement
• 1st Amendment to the U.S. Constitution protects the rights of citizens to petition their government
• Federalist 10, written by James Madison, laid out the importance of lobbying/advocacy and competing interests
• Madison argued factions could lead to downfall of democracy, unless factions were counteracted by other factions—hence, lobbying

Making the Case for Grassroots Engagement
• It always starts with an idea
• "There ought to be a law..."
• Where does this come from?
• Yes, me, organizations, state agencies and even the legislators themselves

Making the Case for Grassroots Engagement
Bill is Introduced
How the sausage is made
Vote

Make Your Voice Heard!
Making the Case for Grassroots Engagement

- You are the expert.
- Facts and figures are useful, but stories are compelling
- Thousands of bills are introduced each Congress. Their fates are often in the hands of grassroots advocates
- Now more than ever, constituent voices matter.

How Can I Make A Difference?

- Visiting Washington, D.C.
- Grassroots in your state
- Short on Time: Grassroots at home

How Can I Make a Difference?

- Visit your congressional delegation
  - Either at home or in Washington, D.C., their job is to represent your interests
  - You are an expert
  - You are a resource
  - You have an opinion
  - You’re a voter

Visiting Your Congressional Delegation

- Anatomy of a Congress Office
  - Member of Congress
    - Chief of Staff
    - Legislative Director
    - Legislative Assistant
    - Legislative Correspondent
    - Staff Assistant

Visiting Your Congressional Delegation

- Try and schedule a meeting with the legislator when possible.
- “Walk-in” meetings are fine, but scheduling an appointment ensures a better chance of a face-to-face, especially during session.
- Meeting with the aides sometimes is just as good, if not better!
- Be constructive and courteous. Do not oversay the time allotted, or overkill the situation with a sales pitch or long stories.
- You are the expert! Let the legislators know that and they will appreciate it. You will become a resource to them.
Make the Most of Your Meeting

- Have an “Ask” or Be a Resource
- Tell your story or make your case for a specific need
  - Provide examples
  - Provide data
  - Tie it to the district or state
  - Be aware of opposition or the devil’s advocate
  - Is there a cost?
  - Economy, economy, economy

Make the Most of Your Meeting

Making your argument:

- There is little to no opposition to this issue
- We have done thorough research on this issue.
- Our proposal will save the State “X” dollars.
- Our bill will create “X” jobs
- This bill is revenue-neutral; it won’t require a tax increase or spending cut elsewhere
- Similar bills have been enacted in other states with positive results.

Make the Most of Your Meeting

Things to Avoid Saying (if you can)

- We don’t know what this will cost
- Why don’t you just cut spending here in order to pay for what we want
- We are divided on this issue
- Idle (or real!) threats i.e. “if you don’t do this for us....”

Make the Most of Your Meeting

- You are a constituent
- You are the expert
- Be prepared
- Staff are young, but influential
- A first meeting is just step 1
- “I don’t know, but I’ll find out” beats a half-truth every time.

Opportunities to Get Engaged

Fly-Ins * Drive-Ins * Town Hall Meeting * Legislative Action Center * Site Visits * District Meetings * State Associations * GA Subcommittees * Washington Update newsletter * Op-Eds and Letters to the Editor * Action Alerts * NGWA PAC

2018 NGWA Groundwater Fly-In & Water Resources Congressional Summit

- March 6 and 7 Washington, D.C.
  - 20F Conference Center (venue)
  - Washington Court Hotel (conference hotel)
  - WQA and Irrigation Association also participate
- Two-day event is the premiere opportunity to engage in advocacy with NGWA members
  “If you don’t speak up for groundwater, who will?"
2018 NGWA Groundwater Fly-In & Water Resources Congressional Summit

- March 6:
  - Keynote luncheon speaker
  - Join colleagues from NGWA, IA, and WQA for a half-day briefing from policymakers, influencers, and stakeholders on issues in Washington
  - Receive a tailored policy briefing on NGWA issues
  - Meet your group
  - Practice your talking points
  - Evening reception with Capitol Hill staff, members of Congress

- March 7
  - Meet with House and Senate offices
  - NGWA provides your schedule of visits
  - App on your smartphone directs your day, gives you chance to provide feedback, and make notes for follow-up
  - Wrap-up event with your colleagues to exchange stories

Avoid the Beltway: Town Halls

- Visit your members’ websites to find dates/times for town halls
- Sign up in advance
- Show up early and introduce yourself
- Practice your question in advance
- Leave your business card and follow-up

Avoid the Beltway: Host a site visit

- Drilling sites, brownfields clean-ups, or just your office are important ways to show groundwater’s presence in your district
- Plan ahead: Check the congressional schedule to see when they’ll be in the district
- NGWA can help with publicity, talking points, and putting your best food forward
- Consider safety regulations, photo opportunities, NGWA calendar

Avoid the Beltway: Visit the District Office

- Check the congressional schedule
- Same rules as Washington, D.C. meetings apply
- Bringing representatives from multiple businesses helps to reinforce breadth and depth of NGWA
- NGWA can provide information on who to contact and details on approach
Avoid the Beltway: Congressional Drive-In

- Involved in your state association?
  - Coordinate a “Drive-In”
  - Same rules apply, but amplified impact
  - Coordinated effort can begin with state capitol or district offices of members of Congress
  - Talking points used in NGWA Groundwater Fly-In can serve as template for “ask”
  - Fly-In objectives can be reinforced by tying it back to the district

Short on time? Start simple.

NGWA’s Legislative Action Center
- [www.ngwa.org/advocacy](http://www.ngwa.org/advocacy)
- 2017 Legislative Action Alerts
- Restore parity for geothermal heat pumps
- Delay the ELD mandate
- Stay Tuned:
  - Tax Reform
  - PFAS Health Study
  - Grad school tuition deduction
  - End of year spending package

NGWA PAC
- NGWA-PAC is a bipartisan political action committee to support the election of candidates to the House & Senate
- NGWA-PAC serves allows NGWA members to support and help elect candidates who care about the issues that matter to our businesses
- PACs allow the pooling of contributions, which increases the impact of contributions, rather than acting alone to support candidates
If you don’t speak up for groundwater, who will?

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