Moderator:

Ashley Smith
Senior Associate, Grassroots Advocacy - National League of Cities
Congressional City Conference

Federal Advocacy 101

Ashley Smith
Senior Associate, Grassroots Advocacy
NLC

#NLCDC
Overview

• NLC’S Federal Action Agenda
• Why is Effective Communication Important?
• Building a Strong Message and Communicating It Effectively
• Breakout Exercise – Elevator Pitch
• Q&A
Federal Action Agenda

CITIES LEAD 2.0
Public Safety
Infrastructure
Economy

NLC: Building relationships so cities get a seat at the table
2017 IN ADVOCACY

CONGRESS IS IN SESSION...

95 DAYS
2016

145 DAYS
2017

CONTINUING RESOLUTION through APRIL 28

145 DAYS UNTIL AUGUST RECESS

FY 2018 BEGINS IN 207 DAYS
Congressional City Conference

Messaging and Communicating with Federal Leaders

#NLCDC
Why it Matters – By the Numbers

• 200-1,000% increase in mail/email volume to congressional offices over past decade

• 0% increase in congressional staffing levels

• 12,063 measures introduced by 114th Congress – only 329 signed into law

• 59 new members of Congress
You Are Influential!

If your Member/Senator has not already arrived at a firm decision on an issue, how much influence might the following advocacy strategies directed to the Washington office have on his/her decision?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advocacy Strategy</th>
<th>Influence</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-Person Issue Visits from Constituents</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact from a Constituent Who Represents Other Constituents</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualized Postal Letters</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualized Email Messages</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone Calls</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments During a Telephone Town Hall</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit From a Lobbyist</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NLC University

Welcome to the
NLCU Federal Advocacy Workspace
Resources for Legislative Advocacy

WORKSPACE CONTENT

The Power of Advocacy
The best person to advocate for your community is YOU! Find out why you should be the one to advocate for your city to Congress, and how you can make ... Read More

SMART Strategy
To have an impact, you've got to be SMART. Learn how to set goals and lay the groundwork for your community's advocacy efforts. Interactive Toolkit Interactive Toolkit Transcript (PDF) PDF ... Read More

USER SURVEY

I would like to receive credit for this course in NLC University's Certificate Program *

- Yes
- No

I am interested in receiving notifications when new courses are added to NLC University. *

- Yes

https://learning.govloop.com/nlcuniversity/
Know What You Want

SMART Goals

• Specific
• Measurable
• Attainable
• Relevant
• Timely
Know What to Say

SPIT Technique

• Specific
• Personal
• Informative
• Timely
Know Who to Talk To

- Member of Congress
- Chief of Staff
- Legislative Director
- Legislative Assistant
- Legislative Correspondent
Elevator Pitch Steps

The “Three W’s”

• WHO are you?
  • Introduce yourself – what are your credentials?

• WHAT do you want?
  • Make your ask – use your SPIT message and keep it simple!

• WHY does it matter to your legislator?

Exchange contact information and keep the door open

REMEMBER: Always be courteous, no matter what happens
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Breakout Exercise

#NLCDC
Elevator Pitch Steps

The “Three W’s”

- **WHO are you?**
  - Introduce yourself – what are your credentials?

- **WHAT do you want?**
  - Make your ask – use your SPIT message and keep it simple!

- **WHY does it matter to your legislator?**
Questions?

Please fill out this session’s evaluation on the NLC Events app!

Contact me!

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NLC
asmith@nlc.org
202-626-3094
Use this reference guide to craft a message that is specific, personal, informative, and timely to gain attention and prompt action.

Steps for Building Your Message:

- Establish the importance of the city perspective.
- Target your message so that it focuses on your local environment and legislators.
- Create different versions of your message to resonate with certain members of Congress and political situations.

SPIT Messages

After you create your general message, you will convert it to a targeted local message that will resonate with your members of Congress and their staff. Like you, members of Congress care most about the constituents and communities they represent. Therefore, developing messages relevant to your community is critical to effective advocacy. You can use the SPIT technique: Specific, Personal, Informative, Timely.

**SPECIFIC**

Be as specific as possible about what your legislator can do.

- Vague: Please help our city continue to provide valuable services.
- Better: We would like you to cosponsor a bill.

**PERSONAL**

Powerful messages are personal in nature.

- Find people in your community who can help you tell a story related to your issue.
- Compelling stories have greater impact.
- Which local citizens have benefited from specific projects or services?

**INFORMATIVE**

You may need to describe:

- Number of people served.
- Number of people employed.
- Specifics about programs provided.
- Geographic reach of the service.
- Demographics of the community.
- Special services provided to the community.

**TIMELY**

Demonstrate how your message relates to a decision that will be made in the near future.

- Example: Because Congress considers these issues annually, as part of DOT funding legislation, the TIGER program is an important priority for your consideration at this time.
Example:

SCENARIO:
In 2013, the Department of Transportation (DOT) awarded the city of Goldsboro, North Carolina a $10 million Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant. This program is authorized and funded through Congress, but is often a target for elimination.

MESSAGE:
Please continue to fund the TIGER program. In Goldsboro, we have used these funds to benefit small businesses. Through this grant we plan to complete three major transportation projects serving 16 blocks and more than 240 small businesses. These projects will spur $9.7 million in economic growth and development and create 481 jobs. Because Congress considers these issues annually, as part of DOT funding legislation, the TIGER program is an important priority for your consideration at this time.

SPECIFIC:
A specific action was mentioned: “Continue to fund the TIGER program.”

PERSONAL:
The message mentioned that small businesses have benefited from the program.

INFORMATIVE:
The message listed the number of businesses that will benefit, the amount of economic growth to be gained, and the number of jobs to be created.

TIMELY:
The message mentioned that Congress considers this issue annually, so the decision will need to be made soon.
Define which needs and goals are most important to your community. Your city’s needs should shape your advocacy goals. Once you have established your initial goal, you need to ensure that it is something you can truly achieve for your constituents. Any effective engagement effort must start with a well-defined goal.

**SMART Goals**

**SPECIFIC**
To create a specific goal, answer questions about “what, where and why.”
- What do we want?
- Where does it need to happen?
- Why do we want it?

**MEASURABLE**
To make your goal measurable, establish concrete criteria to determine whether progress is being made.

**ATTAINABLE**
Select a goal that is attainable, or has some potential for success in the current environment.

**REALISTIC**
Your goal should also be realistic. Select a goal that leadership is both willing and able to work toward achieving.

**TIMELY**
Establish a time frame for completing the goal.
You may have an opportunity to deliver your message to a member of Congress or his or her staff directly, either over the phone or in person. Your message should be specific, personal, informative, and timely (SPIT). Often, however, you will have limited time to get your point across. This worksheet helps you to hone your message and succinctly sell your idea in a moment’s notice. Use the formula and example to build your message.

**Formula**

Begin by stating your **name, position, and city**. You want to establish your relevancy, particularly your connection to the district.

Next, state your **specific issue**.

Explain **why the issue is important** to the people you represent. Remember, to mention some personal and informative details.

Describe **what you would like the member of Congress to do**, and make your message timely by stating when the action needs to happen.

State how you plan to **follow up** with the member of Congress.

Conclude by asking for **contact information** for the appropriate staff in the legislator’s office.

**Example**

Hello, my name is Jane Doe, and I’m a city councilwoman in Goldsboro, North Carolina.

I would like to talk to you about continued funding for TIGER grants.

This is important to the people I represent because the grant will help us leverage more than $9 million in local economic development.

That’s why I really hope you’ll fund the TIGER program in my district when Congress makes its annual vote on DOT funding legislation.

I’d like to follow up by scheduling a visit for you to see the progress we’re making.

Can I get contact information for all the appropriate people in your office?
Craft Your Message

INSTRUCTIONS
For each component of the verbal message formula, replace the information in brackets with your information.

SCRIPT
Hello, my name is [name], and I’m a [position] from [city].

I would like to talk to you about [policy/relationship ask].

This is important to the people I represent because [personal story and informative details].

That’s why I really hope you’ll [ask].

I’d like to follow up by [ideas].

Can I get contact information for all the appropriate people in your office?
This document provides an overview of what a thank-you note should include. It also includes a template and example you may use to craft your own thank-you notes.

Overview

Each thank-you note that you send to a member of Congress should generally follow the same basic outline.
- The greeting, e.g., “Dear Senator Smith:” or “Dear Congresswoman Jones:”
- Thank you for the specific action that you appreciate.
- Brief, specific details about the positive effects that the member of Congress’s or staff’s action will have on your city.
- Salutation, signature, your name and title.

Template

To: [email address of the member of Congress or the appropriate office staff person]
Subject: [a short specific subject that mentions “thank you” or “thanks”]

Dear [Senator/Congresswoman/Congressman Name or if a staff person, Mr., Miss, Ms. or Mrs. Name]:

Thank you for [specific action that you appreciate, for example, the legislator making a site visit in your community or voting a certain way, or the staff being helpful].

[Briefly describe the positive effects that the legislator’s or staff’s action will have on your city.]

Sincerely,

[Name]
[Title]
Example

To: jim.jordan@mail.house.gov
Subject: Thank you for your visit

Dear Congressman Jordan:

Thank you for your recent visit to meet with our city staff and tour our new bus depot. We appreciated you taking the time to learn about the positive impact that this bus depot is having on the lives of our residents and how the city funds these projects. We also particularly appreciated your district staff’s work in coordinating our tour and their help in getting the Channel 20 news reporters to join the event.

The City of Maywood prioritizes rebuilding and developing new infrastructure, which is often funded through tax-exempt municipal bonds. Your continued support of the federal tax exemption for municipal bonds helps to ensure that Maywood and many other cities can afford to make these investments in our communities for years to come. As you and your staff tackle comprehensive tax reform, I hope we can continue to serve as a resource on the value of preserving this funding source for city projects.

Sincerely,

Hattie Dickson
Mayor
Key Take-Aways
NLC University – Federal Advocacy 101
Monday March 13th
1:45 pm – 3:15 pm

Presenters: Ashley Smith

1. Learn about NLC’s Federal Action Agenda and why it’s more important than ever for local leaders to advocate for city priorities

2. Understand why effective communication with members of Congress and their staff is important

3. Explore how to build a strong message and practice your elevator pitch