



**Establishing A
State Government
Relations Program**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	03
MAKING AN IMPACT	04
WHY INVOLVEMENT IS IMPORTANT	05
It's Your Professional Duty	
ASCE Strategic Plan	
Lobbying Is Not a Dirty Word	
HOW TO GET STARTED	07
Starting Your Section/Branch State Government Relations Program	
Select a State Government Relations Contact	
Organize a State Government Affairs Committee	
Develop a Government Relations Mission Statement	
Determine Your Priority Issues	
Identify Important Legislators	
Produce a Regional Infrastructure Report Card	
Sell Your Program	
ASCE's State Public Affairs Grants Program	
ASCE as a Resource	
The Media	
BUILD YOUR NETWORK	14
Build Relationships	
Meeting with Elected Officials	
Develop and Use Key Contacts	
Identify and Join Coalitions	
MORE ADVANCED ACTIVITIES	18
Hiring a Professional Lobbyist	
Engineers in Public Policy Positions	
Get Involved in Political Campaigns	
Why Not Run for Office?	
TOOLS OF THE TRADE	21
Tips on Grassroots Advocacy	
Tips for Dealing with Regulators	
Tips for Writing to a State Legislator	
Tips for Calling a State Legislator	
Always Follow Up	
Measuring Success	
APPENDICES	25
Sample Letter to a State Legislator	
Sample Press Release	
Sample Media Advisory	
Hiring and Managing a Professional Lobbyist	

Bridge the Gap: Engineers and Public Policy

This handbook will serve as a guide for all those who want to establish a State Government Relations program in their Sections, Branches or Regions.

Civil engineers are constantly presented with the challenge of improving the nation's infrastructure. Whether it involves roads, bridges, airports, tunnels, buildings, waste disposal or water supply, civil engineers are called upon to provide solutions to improve the public's quality of life. With all these responsibilities placed on civil engineers, it is easy to overlook the significant role of government on our profession. In order to fulfill our mission to protect the public health and safety¹, civil engineers must be involved in the policy making and legislative process at all levels of government.

While many people recognize the need to become involved in public policy issues, those same people may hesitate to engage with elected officials, who often may appear disinterested and are often perceived as inaccessible. Regardless of your views toward elected officials, the fact is that their support is vital to our profession. They make decisions that affect issues as diverse as licensing regulations for engineers, funding for infrastructure improvements, and standards that govern lawsuits involving civil engineers. However, experience has shown that elected officials are usually quite approachable, are often open to ideas, and welcome constituent input.

Many engineers find public policy to be frustrating. Engineering is a tangible process wherein engineers use their education and skills to design, construct and operate infrastructure that directly improves the public's quality of life. Engineers can actually see the concrete results of their work. Public policy is not so clear cut; the process is time consuming and influenced by many variables. Formulating sound public policy is dependent on people who have knowledge of the political system. Unlike designing and building a physical structure, it can be difficult to see and measure timely progress in public policy change. Measuring progress in public policy requires a shift in timeframe expectations along with the establishment of long term relationships with elected officials and those that influence them.

There are only a handful of engineers serving in public office nationwide. In most states, the fate of issues that impact the profession are in the hands of people who know little about engineering and the type of work you do. Although they may not realize it, legislators depend on your input as a practitioner and expert to craft sound public policy relating to engineering issues. This requires civil engineers like you to seize the opportunity to provide this information to policymakers and their staff, even though you may not be directly asked.

"You've got to insert yourself into the process. You have to find out what's going on in that process and you have to insert yourself into that decision making. Don't wait to be asked." Former Texas Senator and Lieutenant Governor Bill Ratliff, P.E., M.ASCE.

No one else is going to do it for you!

1 ASCE Code of Ethics, Fundamental Canon #1

You can make a difference!

There are many ways for private citizens to influence public policy. The most obvious and fundamental way is by voting for candidates who most closely mirror their own views. Even following this simple strategy can have payoffs—many people who are eligible to vote never even register to, and many registered voters never actually vote. The first step to influencing public policy and participating in the legislative process is by voting.

Beyond voting, the simplest way to influence legislators and advocate on issues important to Civil Engineers is to communicate with them about pending legislation. This can be done by phone, email, letter, or face-to-face meeting. Of these methods, putting your views in writing remains the most effective communication tool. Crafting a personal, reasoned email or letter on an issue has impact. Since it takes more effort to write comments than to make a phone call, lawmakers believe that someone who takes the time to correspond with them regarding an issue genuinely cares about it, and will be likely to remember the action that the lawmaker takes on that issue.

But be careful! This reasoning does NOT hold true for form emails that are simply forwarded at the request of an organization (including ASCE). While these “form emails” are beneficial personalized communication is a better approach. To truly show your commitment and conviction to an issue, your message must be your own citing examples from your own life experience to bolster your argument.

One of the best ways to make a point to your lawmakers, is to meet with them face-to-face. In general, your effectiveness will increase the better you get to know your legislators and build relationships with them. Call your legislator’s local office and request a meeting to introduce yourself and inform them of your expertise, your association with ASCE, and the availability of the ASCE Policy Statements.

Many people avoid getting involved with public policy because they believe that their elected officials would not be interested in the topics that concern them or that political leaders do not have the time to discuss issues with them. THIS IS NOT TRUE.

Lawmakers often seek the advice of outside experts, like civil engineers, in order to increase their understanding of complex issues. Elected officials represent all of the citizens of their Districts and have an obligation to listen to their views. Not only is this necessary, but elected officials benefit by being better informed. However, for advice on policy questions, lawmakers tend to turn first to those people who have built relationships with them and earned their trust.

It is essential to build relationships based on trust with state legislators and other key policy leaders. By building relationships, you can express your concerns and influence elected or appointed officials. Making an impact can be highly rewarding—both personally and professionally.

Elevate your influence as an advocate by becoming an ASCE Key Contact.
To join the Key Contact program, visit <http://www.asce.org/keycontacts/>

WHY INVOLVEMENT IS IMPORTANT

It's Your Professional Duty

State legislatures considered over 180,000 bills in 2014, and few of us realize how many of them may affect our lives, our families, and our professions. If your legislators do not hear from you, they don't know that you care about an issue. You should not take it for granted that someone else will speak up on your behalf or that an elected official has taken your interests into account.

MORE IMPORTANT, YOUR OPPONENTS MAY GET THERE FIRST!

There are many reasons why it is important for you and your Section or Branch to get involved with legislative and regulatory issues that affect your profession.

- The responsibility for public involvement by civil engineers can be traced to the objective of ASCE and the profession. The objective of ASCE is "the advancement of the science and profession of engineering to enhance the welfare of humanity." (ASCE Constitution)
- If we take our responsibilities seriously, then we have an obligation to be involved in the formation of public policy. The ASCE Code of Ethics states that "engineers shall hold paramount the safety, health and welfare of the public..." and that "engineers should seek opportunities to be of constructive service in civic affairs and work for the advancement of the safety, health and well-being of their communities..." Providing the best technical information and advice to public office holders is part of this duty and helps legislators to make informed decisions.
- Civil engineers must be acutely aware of the decisions being made in government that affect the way we carry out our professional duties in service to the public. Civil engineers have training enabling us to conceptualize, plan, design, construct and maintain facilities. Civil engineers should assist public officials in making informed decisions. By getting involved in public policy, we can enhance the image of civil engineering as a people-serving profession.

ASCE Strategic Plan

ASCE's Strategic Plan includes The Vision of Civil Engineering in 2025 which supports the involvement of Civil Engineers in public policy. The Vision reads as follows:

"Entrusted by society to create a sustainable world and enhance the global quality of life, civil engineers serve competently, collaboratively, and ethically as: master planners, designers, constructors, and operators of society's economic and social engine—the built environment; stewards of the natural environment and its resources; innovators and integrators of ideas and technology across the public, private, and academic sectors; managers of risk and uncertainty caused by natural events, accidents, and other threats; and leaders in discussions and decisions shaping public environmental and infrastructure policy."

Government action is one of the main reasons that associations form and are able to accomplish policy changes that individuals can't accomplish on their own. Engineers need to make sure that government is responsive to the needs of its citizens in the scientific and technical arena and that policy decisions are made that are sound from an engineering perspective. You have the knowledge that government and society needs. It is important to society that you speak up on public policy issues about which you have specialized knowledge.

Lobbying Is Not a Dirty Word

The general public holds a negative perception about lobbyists and lobbying. Webster's dictionary defines lobbying as "the process of attempting to influence or sway (a public official) toward a desired action." The average legislator does not have the background to always make informed decisions on complex scientific, engineering, or technical issues, so your role as credible source of information and advocate on issues affecting Civil Engineers and Infrastructure is encouraged and needed.

It is important to remind your fellow engineers and colleagues that it is appropriate and necessary to attempt to influence public policy.

The First Amendment of the United States Constitution affirms "the right of the people ... to petition the government for redress of grievances." And Americans today continue to exercise this right, lobbying for causes in which they believe.

It is legal for your Section, Branch or Region to lobby public officials about issues affecting civil engineering. However, as a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization, the Internal Revenue Service restricts the organization from devoting more than a minimal amount of its budget to activities attempting to influence legislation, and strictly prohibits participation in any partisan political campaign on behalf of a candidate for public office. This means that we can inform and educate on an issue, but not endorse a candidate or slate in an election.

An organization is attempting to lobby or influence legislation if it contacts, or urges its members to contact, members of a legislative body for the purpose of proposing, supporting, or opposing legislation, or if it advocates the adoption or rejection of legislation.

However, under IRS regulations, an organization can distribute educational material, even to legislative audiences, without it being considered "lobbying." To be educational, a 501(c)(3) organization's material must fit these rules:

1. The presentation must be based on facts rather than unsupported opinion;
2. The facts must be accurate and undistorted;
3. The organization's presentation, though it may offer the organization's position or view, must not be inflammatory, overly emotional, or disparaging; and
4. The presentation must be tailored to the background or training of the intended audience.

Educational material, even if distributed to legislators, is not lobbying unless it contains a few specific additional elements intended to influence legislators. According to association law expert Jeffrey Tenenbaum:

"To be considered lobbying, a communication must refer to and reflect a view on a specific legislative proposal or legislation that has been introduced before a legislative body (federal, state, or local). Actions by executive, judicial, or administrative bodies (e.g., regulations) are excluded from the definition of lobbying. Lobbying may be either direct or grassroots."

In other words, engineering professionals talking one-on-one with their public officials is a key part of the process. Remember, there is always more than one side to an issue and your goal is to see that the civil engineering profession's perspective is heard.

If you have questions about whether or not a certain activity constitutes lobbying or could be a violation of the Society's standing as a 501(c)(3) organization, please contact ASCE's Government Relations Department or Legal Department for clarification.

Starting Your Section/Branch State Government Relations Program

Now that you have decided a state government relations program would be an effective tool to enhance your Section, Region and profession, what is the blueprint for success? Listed below are basic steps for getting your state government relations program off the ground. Over time, the program will evolve. **The most important thing is to get started!**

Select a State Government Relations Contact

Choosing a leader of your State Government Relations Committee will be an important and difficult decision. Your government relations committee can begin as a committee of one, but that one person has to be the right individual. It is someone who is skilled in working with people, has an interest in politics and is generally familiar with the legislative process or willing to learn. He or she must be a consensus builder and realize the importance of coalition building. The champion must have time to dedicate to activities such as attending legislative committee hearings, scheduling and attending meetings with legislators and staff and motivating other ASCE members to increase their involvement in legislative advocacy. Most important, the person must have the desire and drive to be successful in promoting civil engineering issues at the state capitol.

That special person exists in your Section. You just have to find that “diamond in the rough.” The burden should not, however, fall on your champion alone. Help is available through programs like State Public Affairs Grants (SPAG), which can be used to support the Section’s activities, and assistance and advice from ASCE staff on putting together and running a state government relations program. Additionally, experience has shown that there is likely a dedicated core of Section members ready to act but is waiting for a champion to lead and encourage their involvement.

Organize a State Government Affairs Committee

Even when you find the right person to head up your Section’s government relations efforts, he or she does not have to do the job alone. A government relations committee, even if it consists of only a few other Section members will increase the effectiveness of the Section’s efforts. Make a personal effort to get members involved by actively soliciting volunteers in the Section newsletter and at meetings.

If possible, assemble the committee to reflect the diversity of your membership. This will allow different ideals and expertise to be presented and discussed. Remember, ASCE has members in the private, public and academic sectors, as well as a diversity of practice areas such as transportation, structural, water, environment and sustainable infrastructure. Often, proposed legislation will affect only one of these disciplines and having a variety represented gives your committee more breadth on issues.

Having a committee responsible for state government relations will serve several functions. First, it distributes the work among a number of volunteers so that the burden is not on one person. Second, it provides a measure of oversight to keep the Section’s government relations program moving in the right direction.

GET STARTED NOW: Your Section can establish a State Government Relations Committee at its next meeting and start to educate elected officials on issues of concern and importance to Civil Engineers and ASCE.

Develop a Government Relations Mission Statement

What activities should be the committee's focus? Identify activities that are of interest to your members, and what you want to ask of the membership. One method is to poll your members on what issues are important to them. It is important to focus your efforts when dealing with public policy issues, so developing a short mission statement (2-3 sentences) will help keep your Section/Branch's government relations activities focused.

Activities that you should consider include:

- Tracking state and local legislation of importance to civil engineers and keeping members informed;
- Tracking state and local regulatory activities of importance to civil engineers;
- Arranging meetings and interactions between engineers and state and local legislators;
- Providing input on state and local legislation;
- Joining and establishing coalitions;
- Promoting qualified engineers for appointment to state and local positions.

Determine Your Priority Issues

Every year the ASCE Board of Direction, with member input, adopts a list of priority issues in state government relations, available in the Advocacy section of the ASCE website at <http://www.asce.org/advocacy/>.

Some of the issues on the national priority issues list for state government relations might not be applicable to your state. For example, if your state recently made major revisions to its building codes, taking into account civil engineering concerns, your section/branch does not need to focus on that issue. However, if your state is in the midst of a fight over smart growth regulations, it would make sense for you to weigh in with your expertise on that issue. You should still feel free to pursue the issue if it is important to you. After all, the idea of a state government relations program is to produce results in state and local government that improve the situation for civil engineers in your area. Be aware, however, that ASCE has policy positions on over 160 different issues. While you do not have to actively support all of ASCE's policy positions, you are **prohibited from taking or supporting positions in opposition to ASCE** positions. This is important because the Society needs to speak with a united voice on public policy issues.

If your government relations program is just starting out, it is best to pick one or two issues on which to focus the Section's efforts. Getting involved in more issues than you can handle could prevent the Section from being successful on any issues. Success requires time and effort. If the committee volunteers are stretched too thin, success may be elusive.

Identify Important Legislators

The committee can identify supportive or disinterested elected officials in the state legislature by conducting a survey of legislators on civil engineering issues. This approach can help identify allies and individuals that need more information and education on civil engineering issues. Here is a simple checklist to complete a survey:

1. Draft the survey.
2. Addresses of legislators often can be obtained from the state legislature's website, or through another office of the state legislature itself. (ASCE staff can help you with this as well.)
3. Include a return envelope with the survey.
4. You will increase your return rate by having a web survey. There are a number of free and low-cost, easy to use web services available including Zoomerang and Survey Monkey.
5. Consider surveying state legislators by phone. Be aware that this is a much more time-consuming process.

Once you get your survey returns, the Government Relations Committee should analyze the results to find potential new allies. Your time will be most effectively spent cultivating friends and allies among lawmakers. However, this does not mean you should ignore your opponents. Identify your biggest opponents and make an effort to educate them on ASCE's positions on the issues. An opponent could simply be misinformed about the civil engineering profession and ASCE's positions. Be prepared, however, for the fact that an opponent might not be receptive to your message. Some legislators are simply never going to agree with ASCE's positions, whether because of personal interest, different philosophical beliefs, fiscal perspective, influence from other groups or a simple lack of understanding of civil engineering issues.

Produce a Regional Infrastructure Report Card

ASCE continues to receive national and local attention from lawmakers and the media due to the Report Card for America's Infrastructure. The Report Card highlights the deficiencies that exist in the conditions of and funding levels for several categories of infrastructure. It continues to spark national debate about infrastructure funding. At the Federal level, the Report Card has been used to support several legislative campaigns including passage of the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21), the Water Resources and Development Act, transportation infrastructure laws, as well as bills regarding dam safety legislation and infrastructure renewal.

Dozens of ASCE Sections have used this model to produce their own state and regional Report Cards. Using a report card to document needs and deficiencies in a state's or region's infrastructure can be a powerful tool to push for improvements. By the same token, highlighting infrastructure categories where your state or region is doing well can be a way to help build relationships with elected leaders.

Producing a state or regional report card is actually not as difficult as it sounds, and ASCE has produced a guide to help Sections. The guide presents a step-by-step approach to creating a state or regional report card on infrastructure, from what to do before starting to how to publicize the report card once it's done.

For more information, or to obtain copies of the Regional Report Card Guide, contact ASCE's Government Relations Department at **202-789-7850** or visit ASCE's website at http://www.asce.org/report_cards/.

Sell Your Program

A state government relations program must have the support and involvement of ASCE members to survive. The Sections' leaders have a responsibility to articulate the importance of a government relations program and to solicit involvement.

Use the Section/Branch newsletter, website and social media sources to keep members apprised of the committee's activities and of news from the state capital, or provide updates in a weekly or monthly email.

Invite a legislator/policymaker to talk to your Section members about the importance of becoming involved with public policy. Have the politician explain the most effective methods to lobby elected officials. That advice can help break the ice for many of your members.

Host a half-day or day-long Government Relations University (GR University) program. GR University workshops are *free of charge* and are designed to offer Sections/Branches a "crash course" in interacting with policymakers. ASCE government relations staff will travel to the section or branch hosting the training.

You can request more information at http://www.asce.org/pr_and_gr_universities/.

ASCE's State Public Affairs Grants Program

The State Public Affairs Grants (SPAG) program provides money to Sections/Branches for government and public affairs activities. This grant program, created by the Board of Direction in 1998, encourages Sections/Branches to promote and enhance the Society through new government and public relations activities the Section/Branch may otherwise be unable to afford. Sections (and Branches through their Section) can apply for two types of grants that are awarded on a competitive basis: Small for amounts up to \$1500, and/or Large for amounts \$1500–\$5000. Sections can apply for up to four grants (two small and two large). Grants are judged on a merit basis with funds going to those projects that best fit the program's goals and make the most efficient use of funds.

Sections may receive grants to help offset costs of many projects including organizing a lobby day at the state capitol, producing a state or regional report card, hiring a lobbyist, hosting a "training day" on government affairs issues and techniques for Section membership, hosting a breakfast with state legislators, and running a public relations campaign to promote the engineering profession.

Other activities that have received SPAG funding include starting a State Legislative fellows program, similar to ASCE national's Congressional Fellows program, and running a multi-pronged government and public relations program.

Complete guidelines on the State Public Affairs Grants Program can be found by visiting the ASCE website at http://www.asce.org/state_public_affairs_grant_program/.

ASCE as a Resource

ASCE's Government Relations Department is here to help Sections make their government relations programs successful. This can be as simple as answering some basic questions to providing advice about legislative strategy, to creating a training program for Section members. Sections should not hesitate to use ASCE staff as a resource. Among the specific services we offer are:

- **Member/District Matching.** Receive a list of your state's Key Contacts with their state elected officials. This can make communications between your Section members and their elected officials much easier.
- **Legislative Expertise.** ASCE staff has experience dealing with a variety of legislative issues, and can offer advice on drafting or interpreting legislation and planning a legislative campaign.
- **Legislative Tracking.** ASCE tracks proposed legislation (i.e., Multi-State) and regulations on a variety of subjects of concern to civil engineers; including licensure issues, tort reform, infrastructure financing, and other issues. Find out what's happening in your state at <http://www.asce.org/multistate>.
- **Coalition Building.** ASCE regularly works with many other national organizations on issues of mutual concern. If your Section needs information from or about another organization, we may be able to obtain it from the organization's national office.

The Media

Today, civil engineers must work harder than ever to convince key decision makers, legislators, and leaders to support the civil engineering profession, infrastructure renewal and other civil engineering issues. Targeting opinion leaders is the most effective way to bring about change, and getting the general public's support behind an issue can be an extremely effective way to facilitate that change. ASCE encourages every Section to work with their local media, such as newspapers, magazines, and radio and television stations, to communicate with the general public. Convincing reporters that your issue is important enough to the community—their readers, viewers or listeners—to merit coverage in their publication or outlet will help you get your message out to the widest possible audience.

There are two primary types of media recognition: paid media, in the form of advertisements, and "earned", or free media. Earned media comes in two types: news stories and editorials. These are very different forms, and as a result the tactics for gaining favorable coverage in each is different.

Earned Media: News Stories and Editorials

News stories are, at least theoretically, free of the reporter's opinion and are merely an account or summation of an event, program, issue or other topic. For ASCE and/or civil engineering-related issues to be mentioned in this context you will need to undertake activities that are 'newsworthy' (e.g., of sufficient interest to the public to warrant media attention or coverage). These events don't have to be elaborate to get the media's attention; they just have to be timely and well planned. An event can be as simple as issuing a statement or commenting on proposed legislation, or it can be as complex as preparing a Regional Report Card and releasing it during a live press conference.

There are several ways to communicate with the media, including:

- **News Releases and Media Advisories:** The media can't cover an event if they don't know about it, and won't cover an event if you don't tell them why they should care. A media advisory is simply an announcement of or invitation to an event, like a press conference; a one page listing of who, what, where and why. A press release is used to share more detailed information, including explaining the importance of a project or program and how it will impact local communities/businesses/society, though it too should be as short and to-the-point as possible. These two tools are used in conjunction with each other to ensure the best possible communication of your message. See *Appendix of this manual for a sample press release and advisory.*

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- **Press Conferences:** Sometimes an event is newsworthy enough, or the information being communicated is complicated enough, that it warrants more than just a press release. As such, a press conference is best suited for a major news event, like the release of a Regional Report Card, and typically involves ASCE members and other potential speakers (i.e., legislators, partnering societies, etc.) addressing reporters on a single issue and then answering questions. Press conferences typically last less than 30 minutes, and work best with visual aides and a limited number of speakers. Press conferences can also be more effective if they are held at a location that dramatizes the issue at hand, such as in front of a crumbling school building if the subject involves the need to spend more on school facilities, or on the steps of the state capitol if the issue involves new legislation. When planning a press conference, be prepared to send an advisory to your local media alerting them of the event. Also plan to follow up with phone calls to individual reporters a few days before the event.
 - **Editorial Board Meetings:** Editorials express the opinion of media outlets and are usually, but not always, related to items in the news. Because of this, it is easiest to work with a media outlet's editorial department when civil engineering or infrastructure-related issues are in the news, though not always necessary. The best way to influence the editorial policies of your individual local media outlets is to request a meeting with their editorial department on an issue you believe is very important to the community. Don't attempt an editorial board meeting unless you believe your issue is legitimately of concern to or will have a significant impact on the community. Editorial journalists are busy people, and with so many groups clamoring for their attention, they don't like to have their time wasted. When meeting with an editorial board, many of the same rules apply that are valid when meeting with elected officials. Remember that you are meeting with intelligent people who are generally skeptical by nature, and that your job is to convince them your issue should be a matter of concern to both the media outlet and the public at large in your area.
 - **Letters to the Editor/Op-Eds:** Letters to the editor and op-eds are the most common way for private citizens to make their views known. Most newspapers have a Letters to the Editor Section and regularly run op-eds on a variety of issues. In fact, some studies have found that the op-ed and letters to the editor page is the most frequently read part of a newspaper. Both of these tools can allow you to express your views and concerns to a potentially large audience at no cost, though there is never a guarantee that something you submit will be printed. Op-eds tend to reach more people because of their more prominent placement on the page and greater length, but letters to the editor can also be a good source for responding to, clarifying your position on, or stating your support of an issue that has been receiving news coverage. Check with your local newspapers and find out their policy on op-eds and their word count limits and submission guidelines for letters to the editor.

Paid Media: Advertisements

An alternative to both news and editorial coverage is to simply purchase advertising space in a publication, or air time on a radio or television station, to get your message out. Because advertising is typically more effective when done repeatedly, this can be expensive. The simplest and cheapest advertisements are those in print media, such as newspapers and magazines. Radio advertisements are generally more expensive than print, and television advertisements are usually the most expensive. When planning an advertising campaign, be sure to include the cost of producing the advertisements with the cost of purchasing the space in your budget.

For more information about state media relations, contact the ASCE Government Relations Department at **(202)789-7850**, or request a PR University Training at http://www.asce.org/pr_and_gr_universities/

Build Relationships

Relationship building is one of the keys to success in government relations at any level. It is vital to start developing relationships now so that the dividends will pay off in the future. For many people, the idea of meeting with elected officials is possibly the most intimidating aspect of government relations. It shouldn't be. Elected officials are usually happy to meet with constituents and glad to hear about the issues that concern you. Their jobs, after all, are to serve the needs of their constituents and the people in their city or state, and they need to find out what these concerns are to be effective.

Additionally, legislators are often short on reliable information, particularly of a technical nature. Engineers can be a valuable resource to elected officials by providing them with scientifically sound, unbiased information on technical matters. Items like the National Report Card on America's Infrastructure or your Local or State Report Card can provide all the facts that you would need to provide to educate them on ASCE positions. Unlike federal elected-officials, state and local legislators often find this information difficult to come by, and appreciate your help in obtaining it. Make your Section Government Relations committee volunteers available to lawmakers as resources. Don't wait for a legislator to call you for advice.

Which elected officials in particular should you make an effort to get to know?

The best place to start is with elected officials that represent you. Public officials are naturally most responsive to their own constituents, the people who can vote for them. Additionally, an effort should be made to meet with the chairmen of legislative committees that oversee civil engineering issues. These would include the committees that oversee issues such as infrastructure and transportation (Transportation Committee, Infrastructure Committee, and possibly others), tort reform (Judiciary Committee), smart growth (probably several due to the nature of the issue, but particularly Transportation and Land Use/Public Lands), licensure issues, and procurement (will vary by state). These committees are common to most states, but check the state legislature website and review the list of committees to determine each committee's jurisdiction.

Also, don't overlook engineers who already serve in elected office. They should be your natural allies. Not only are they likely to have many personal and professional issues in common with you, such as licensure, procurement, and tort reform, but they often are more concerned about legislative issues of a scientific, engineering, and technical nature than other legislators are. Identify when legislators are typically in their local office and when the legislature is on a break. Use these times to target contact and meetings with the legislator.

Meeting with Elected Officials

Once your Section determines which lawmakers to approach, it's relatively straightforward to actually meet. Timing is very important. Most state legislatures only meet a couple of months a year, and some only meet every other year, so there are definite windows of opportunity. Schedules vary from state to state so check the legislature's website for details.

The Meeting:

- When does the session start and end?
- What are the various filing and action deadlines for new legislation?
- Is it a budget or election year?

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- If you want a legislator to sponsor legislation, you must approach him or her well in advance of the session. During the session you can only reasonably expect some pro or con effort for an already existing bill. It is best to approach the legislator earlier rather than later, or someone else might have already gotten to your targeted member.
 - Remember it is a 12 month cycle. Time that the legislature is not in session can be used for general advocacy and education, and right before the session starts for promoting specific policies.

Before the Meeting:

- Get started by calling the lawmaker's office or requesting a meeting in writing (you may want to call and ask the best method of requesting a meeting as it varies by lawmaker.)
- Prepare a one-page fact sheet on the issue you will discuss and give it to the staffer and/or legislator at the end of your meeting. Some legislators may ask for this information in advance of the meeting, and providing it can lead to a more productive meeting.
- Bring several members of your Section, but no more than four. Whenever possible, have individuals who represent various aspects of the issue you would like to discuss.
- When calling a legislator by phone to set up a meeting, confirm the meeting in writing. If possible, email or fax the letter. Many legislators will ask for a letter.
- Prepare yourself for the meeting by researching and getting to know the background and interests of the legislator. It is particularly helpful to know of any legislation the legislator has recently authored in case you are asked to comment on his/her particular area of interest (which may have nothing to do with civil engineering). Use caution in responding to issues that you are not familiar with. It is better to defer to answer a question at another time than to ad lib a response.

During the Meeting:

- Don't be intimidated.
- Keep the meeting brief and stick to the issue at hand. You can expect to have no more than 15–20 minutes with the legislator.
- Introduce yourself and express that you have expertise that the legislator can access as a resource to review or comment upon legislation.
- Be sure to leave time for questions.
- Never insult or threaten the legislator.
- If you are looking for support on a key piece of legislation, ask about their position at the meeting and seek their support.
- Don't overlook the importance of staffers. A legislator's staff, if they have one, is a very important tool for you. They often serve as the eyes and ears of the legislator and assist them in forming their positions on key issues. Note that some legislative staff members eventually become elected officials themselves so, it is useful to cultivate a relationship with them, as well.

After the Meeting:

Follow up your meeting with thank you letters to the legislator and to staff who attended the meeting – and reiterate your key points.

- If the legislator did not state his or her position at the meeting, find out what questions remain, try to answer them – and continue seeking his or her support.
- Whether you win or lose a legislator’s support, always be gracious. He or she may be an important ally down the road and you have already established yourself as a resource.

Work to maintain your relationships established through meetings between Section members and legislators. Keep in mind that you are dealing with busy people, so don’t waste their time. At the same time, don’t hesitate to contact them as additional issues of importance come up. Letters are usually the most effective way to communicate your views to lawmakers, but phone calls work as well; particularly if the issue is very timely. Email is increasingly becoming the preferred method of presenting written comments. However, if you use email, don’t forget to include your complete home and business address so you can be identified as a constituent.

Reward legislators who support your positions

Because ASCE is a 501(c)(3) organization, we cannot as an organization endorse or otherwise support a candidate for office (e.g. give political contributions). Still, there are other ways for ASCE to legally recognize elected officials who are our friends. One of the best ways is to invite the Legislator to speak at a Section or Branch meeting. This can be helpful to both your Section and the Legislator, by informing members about key legislative issues, and by exposing the Legislator to a group that supports his or her legislative efforts. If possible, identify how many of your local members are constituents of the Legislator. This information can help enhance the Legislator’s understanding of the importance of an issue and their support of your positions. And, an annual award can be established in your Section for a “Legislator of the Year” as recognition of their support of Civil Engineering issues.

Develop and Use Key Contacts

Most legislators will be neither strong allies nor strong opponents of ASCE and our issues. Instead, most legislators will fall somewhere in the middle and support or oppose ASCE on an issue-by-issue basis. As a result, it is important to contact them whenever an issue of importance to ASCE comes up for debate. ASCE’s Key Contact Program provides a framework for building relationships between ASCE members and their elected officials to facilitate these communications.

A Key Contact Program is a system to alert ASCE members in your state when an important piece of legislation is being considered. It is used to provide members information about the legislation and give them the direction they need to contact legislators and express their views on the proposed legislation.

A Key Contact Program is usually nothing more than a database of ASCE members and their contact information. The database is used to contact the members to alert them to legislative happenings. Email is probably the most effective way to send communications to your members because of quick delivery time and low cost. Fax is the next best option for communication, with old-fashioned “snail mail” being the least efficient.

The Key Contact Program can be used as often as your Section/Branch deems appropriate. Use it on a weekly or monthly basis to provide legislative news of interest to civil engineers, or as a system that is only activated as issues of importance to civil engineers emerge.

1. When you send a Key Alert, make sure you include four things:
2. Information about the issue
3. Why it is important to ASCE

-
4. The status of the legislation
 5. Who to contact and how to contact them

Many Section/Branch members may not be familiar with the legislative process, civil engineering issues, or who their elected representatives are. As a result, make involvement as easy as possible. ASCE is able to provide Sections with information linking all members to their state legislators. This can make building a Key Contact database easier for your Section/Branches. If you would like more information on this service, please contact ASCE Government Relations Department staff.

Identify and Join Coalitions

When a group wants to increase its legislative strength, it often forms coalitions with other groups that share similar interests. A coalition is a loose collection of organizations that cooperate to accomplish a common – and often limited – objective. Coalitions are an excellent way to grab the attention of legislators.

The idea of a coalition is to get together a group of like-minded organizations that usually agree on most issues. Unanimous agreement is not needed, and in fact, is not likely to be found, except on the specific issue being addressed by the coalition. Remember, most legislators are neither strong allies nor strong opponents of ASCE's public policy interests. They pay attention to what their constituents say about a given issue. The more of their constituents that speak out on a given issue, the more likely they are to pay attention.

In order to find more people to support you on a given issue, it makes sense to work with other organizations and utilize their members in support of common objectives. Working together in a coalition also makes more sense from a financial perspective; by pooling your resources, everyone gets better results. Whether you want to host a conference, hire a lobbyist, or undertake a media campaign, having more resources, funding and volunteers makes success more likely.

Coalitions can be either short-term or long-term in nature. Short-term coalitions are most often designed around a particular public policy goal, such as the passage or defeat of a specific piece of legislation. They often bring together organizations that do not have very much in common except for the immediate goal at hand, and may even disagree on other issues.

Long-term or permanent coalitions, on the other hand, can be an extremely useful tool for the Section with limited resources. The groups involved in them usually need to have a number of issues in common for the coalition to be successful. Because of this, your most likely long-term coalition partners are other design groups. State affiliates of the American Council of Engineering Companies, the National Society of Professional Engineers and the American Institute of Architects are, for example, natural allies.

When a Section is working with other like-minded groups in a coalition, it is possible to establish a much closer and long term working relationship that can cross over the other legislative issues and lead to other relationships. This allows you to do much longer-range planning with your coalition allies and develop a more comprehensive plan of how to work together to achieve your common goals.

Whenever your Section/Branch forms or agrees to participate in a coalition, there are certain rules to keep in mind. It is important to form a core group, or executive committee, made up of a representative of each group that is a member of the coalition, which can review documents developed by coalition members before they are disseminated. The formation of a core group in the coalition can help legitimize its overall efforts to other members and can help attract others to the coalition while making sure that each group is involved in the decision-making process. Most important, the formation of an executive committee helps avoid criticism that the group is run by one or two people, or groups.

Hiring a Professional Lobbyist

Often it takes more than a grassroots strategy to influence legislation. If that is the case, a Section/Branch may want to consider hiring a professional lobbyist who can provide a level of political expertise that may not otherwise be available. Depending on your organization's needs and budget, determine whether the lobbyist is being hired to lobby a specific issue for a specific outcome, or simply to monitor developments and report back to the group. Evaluate if other groups, that share your views and have mutual goals, already have a Lobbyist and then consider sharing this resource.

Think of hiring a lobbyist as somewhat like hiring a lawyer or other type of consultant: They are people with a particular expertise, and they are often consulted to help resolve a particular problem or issue. However, if the Section needs their services often enough, it may make sense to have them on a retainer to provide certain amounts and kinds of work for you.

While a Section still needs a government relations committee, a lobbyist can be a significant asset to the program. The lobbyist can be a part-time government relations staffer for the Section, and can pick up some of the slack for busy volunteers. Lobbyists can perform functions for the Section such as arranging meetings with key legislators, monitoring legislation and hearings as well as votes on key legislation of concern. This information is valuable during the legislative session, and can help if your Section just starting out in public policy get a better understanding of the process.

Lobbyists are also hired because they have access and influence. The lobbyist may be an expert on an issue, the process (i.e., in dealing with a particular state legislature), or have special contacts. The best lobbyists are the ones who are well respected and know all the key players. Some lobbyists may serve as analysts who can provide regular written reports on legislative and/or regulatory developments. This becomes much more important if your Section wants to utilize a lobbyist to push for or defeat a particular piece of legislation, rather than provide general support for your government relations efforts such as legislative monitoring.

Whatever your needs and expectations are from a lobbyist, there should be a written contract between the two parties, just as there would be between the Section/Branch and other service providers. It should specify exactly what services the lobbyist will perform, how long they will be provided (all year, only during legislative session, etc.), and what his or her fee will be. Contracts for lobbyist services should be reviewed by the ASCE Legal Department.

Hired lobbyists should not replace a Section's public policy strategy or the work of the government relations committee and the other Section members. They should be hired to complement a well-planned lobbying strategy. A lobbyist can play a vital role at critical times for an organization; but a carefully planned strategy should always precede the decision to hire one.

Engineers in Public Policy Positions

One way to help ensure that engineers are able to offer technically sound input on public policy is to have engineers in government making those policy decisions. In order to ensure government delivers sound policy proposals for engineers to work with, engineers need to be in positions where they can formulate and not just implement policy. While some ASCE members work for government entities, they tend to be in technical, rather than policy-related positions. Technical skills are necessary to execute engineering-related policy decisions, but they are equally important to formulating technical policies that need to be executed. ASCE believes that engineers should seek out appointments to public policy positions where engineering experience is an asset.

The easiest "government official" appointments to obtain are usually for unpaid, advisory positions in government, such as on Commissions or Task Forces. Often, these types of positions are difficult to fill and volunteers are welcomed. Serving in this type of capacity has two advantages: the chance to affect public policy, and the chance to obtain future appointments. For example, if someone from your Section would like to someday serve as director of the state's highway department or in a similar capacity, governmental experience will almost certainly be required.

If there is competition for an appointed position that a Section member is interested in, the Section can probably help. Often, a recommendation from an organization like ASCE can assist in obtaining the appointment. If the Section can decide on a candidate that it supports for a position, don't hesitate to help the candidate's application.

While technical expertise is useful for government appointments, experience in public policy and politics may be even more important. To gain this type of experience, get involved in the political party of your choice and seek out candidates who support your views on issues. When you find a candidate you like, support their election efforts by donating your personal time, money and resources to that individual's campaign. Note that ASCE is prohibited as a 501(c)(3) organization from participating in such activities but you, as an individual, can participate in the political process.

Get Involved in Political Campaigns

Campaigning is an integral part of life for elected officials, who are essentially running for re-election almost from the day after they are elected. Elected officials and candidates for elective office are constantly looking for volunteer assistance with their campaigns. This assistance can range from mundane but necessary tasks like stuffing envelopes and putting up yard signs to writing policy papers on specific issues. When ASCE members find candidates and elected officials who share common beliefs, they should consider helping on their campaigns.

Remember, ASCE is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization, and by law is not allowed to support or oppose candidates for election. Campaign activities may only be undertaken by ASCE members acting in their individual capacities, not in their capacities as ASCE members or officers. **No ASCE resources (including those of Sections and Branches) may be used to support any candidate's campaign for office. Failure to abide by these rules can have extremely serious consequences for ASCE, including the Society losing its tax-exempt status.** If you have any questions regarding these rules, what is and is not permissible, please contact the ASCE Government Relations Department.

Despite laws governing ASCE's involvement in campaigns, nothing prohibits individual ASCE members from supporting the candidate of their choice with their own time and money. In fact, all citizens should exercise their rights and participate in election campaigns. Running for and winning elected office is a difficult job, and candidates rely on the support of like-minded individuals to win. If engineers want to keep supporters of the profession in elected office, they need to support their campaigns.

Here are some of the ways to get involved in a campaign:

- **Volunteer in a General Capacity.** It may not be as exciting or glamorous as many other kinds of work, but the nuts and bolts essentials of a campaign have to get done for the candidate to be elected. Candidates rely on volunteers for everything from answering phones and stuffing envelopes to putting up yard signs and handing out literature door-to-door. If approached correctly, it can also be a lot of fun. Think of this as an opportunity to educate people about important issues and do your part to improve the community.
- **Volunteer in a Policy Capacity.** Candidates typically have policy positions on a wide range of issues. To refine and publicize these issues, they often produce position papers, fact sheets, and press releases on particular issues about which you have expertise. After getting to know a candidate, perhaps by working with the campaign in a more general way, you may earn the opportunity to assist the candidate in developing or refining positions on issues such as transportation, water quality, waste disposal, and other civil engineering related issues. Often, candidates need assistance in areas with which they are not completely familiar.
- **Get Friends and Section Members to Volunteer.** The more, the merrier. Either on an ongoing basis, or as a day-long event, this can be a way for your Section to get together while working for a worthwhile goal. **Remember: While this cannot be an official ASCE event,** there is nothing wrong with friends getting together for a common goal.

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- **Make a Financial Contribution.** There's no way around it - running for office is expensive. Most candidates can't afford to finance their campaigns by themselves, and they rely on supporters for campaign contributions. Whatever you desire to give to a candidate as an individual and personal donation will be appreciated by that candidate.
 - **Host a Fundraiser.** Contributing financially to a campaign on your own is always helpful, but you can multiply the usefulness of your donation if you convince friends, co-workers, and others to give as well. Probably the best way to do this is to host a fundraiser for the candidate you support. Always check with the candidate or party organization before planning an event, and follow their established procedures. This event can be as big as you want to make it, but doesn't have to be elaborate or expensive. The easiest way to host a fundraiser is to do it at your home or office (although check on the law in your state as an event in an office may be considered a corporate contribution), and invite guests to attend and meet the candidate. Request a specified donation per person in attendance and welcome larger contributions. Please keep in mind that because of IRS rules governing 501(c)(3) organizations, this CANNOT be an official ASCE event. Also, check on the campaign finance laws in your state before hosting a fundraiser. Some states place tight limits on the maximum contributions an individual may make to a candidate for office, while others are relatively loose. Some states also restrict the types of donations allowed, allowing only contributions from individuals, for example, with other states allowing corporate contributions to campaigns.

Why Not Run for Office?

Sure, it's a big step, but it is the most effective way to promote your views on political issues, including those of civil engineers. If you feel that critical issues in your community are not being addressed, such as the lack of needed infrastructure spending or severe growth restrictions that are causing harm, running for office on these issues may be the best way to draw attention to them. If you win, you will be in a position to do something to improve the situation. In fact, if you do run and win, you will not be the first ASCE member or engineer to do so. Civil engineers currently serve in elected office all over the country in a variety of capacities.

Tips on Grassroots Advocacy

- Learn about your state's legislative committee hearing process.
- Whenever possible, request to testify on issues to share your expertise. Work with others to submit written testimony if making an appearance at a hearing is not possible.
- Once a bill is introduced, get a copy and review it. Does the bill address the appropriate issues? If not, work with other affected groups or the ASCE state government relations staff to suggest amendments.
- When writing your legislator about an issue, also copy the legislative leadership if appropriate (i.e., the speaker, majority and minority leaders, appropriate committee chairs).
- Keep a log of your contacts with legislators: when you first contacted them about an issue, when you followed up, etc.
- Don't underestimate the power of legislative staff. In most cases they are real movers and shakers in the process.
- Try to collect email addresses of legislators for written comments or send letters to communicate your views.

Attend legislative town meetings.

Every legislator or candidate conducts town meetings. Plan to attend. This is an excellent opportunity for you to meet and discuss issues with your legislator in a public forum. You will be surprised how accessible politicians can be.

Government relations is a twelve month program.

A Section's government relations program shouldn't shut down until the next session because the legislature has adjourned. In fact, this downtime provides an excellent opportunity to continue reaching out to state lawmakers. It is probably easier to schedule a meeting with your lawmaker when he or she is back home in the District.

Always invite area elected officials to Section special events.

Every Section is active in community projects, such as cleaning up parks and educating young people about civil engineering; but does your Section invite area legislators to participate? Many politicians will show up for such events if there is an opportunity to build relationships with constituents.

Survey Section/Branch members to learn how many know their legislators.

Many of them have professional or even personal relationships with legislators. Use these contacts to strengthen your program. Encourage members to complete the RAPIndex survey.

Tips for Dealing with Regulators

- Once a bill is passed and becomes law, emphasis switches to the executive branch (regulatory agencies).
- Establish relationships with regulators. Many regulators are "career" employees of the agency.
- Request to be added to the agency's or board's regulatory mailing list or email list.
- Find out who the major players are in the agency.
- Get to the regulatory agency early with your comments; don't wait until the proposed regulations are near completion. In fact, try to meet with the drafters of the regulations before they release the rule to the public.

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- Where possible, draft language which states the Section’s position.
 - Explain how problems can be solved using the regulatory process.
 - Know your subject matter. Regulators usually know the statutes and programs much better than many legislators.

Tips for Writing to a State Legislator

Despite advances in technology, writing continues to be the preferred method of communication for both members of legislatures and staff. The letter or email should be brief and to the point and should always include a request for action. Be sure to include your full postal address and contact information (including email address and preferred phone number) so that the legislator’s office will know where to send a response and, most importantly, identify you as a constituent.

When writing to your legislators, you should include the following elements:

1. Identify yourself as a constituent. Where appropriate, include a brief description of your organization or company. While this may seem obvious, it is surprising how many people forget to include critical information like name, address and/or telephone numbers. If your business is located in the member’s district, be sure to make this clear. A little personal information is both necessary and welcome.
2. Identify the issue and the bill number (if applicable) that you are addressing.
3. Support your argument/position by including examples whenever possible. Describe the impact, both economic and emotional, of passage or defeat of legislation on you, your organization, and your community.
4. Personalize your letter as much as possible. Whenever possible avoid using form letters.
5. Be brief. One of the criteria used in deciding whether your letter is even seen by your legislator is its length. The best format is a regular business letter not exceeding two pages in length. Address a singular issue and be specific.
6. Ask for support or action from the member. People often forget to ask the member to do something or fail to describe what action should be taken (e.g. vote for/against a bill). Remember: If you don’t ask for anything, then you won’t get anything.

For more information, contact ASCE’s Government Relations
Staff at **202-789-7850** or **govwash@asce.org**

Tips for Calling a State Legislator

If the issue is quickly coming up for a vote, you may not always have the time to write to or meet in person with your legislator. In this case, use the telephone. It is a perfectly acceptable and often welcome way to get your views across. While the same general rules apply as when you're in a meeting, there are a few more to consider:

- Use the telephone for less complicated subjects. Make your message much simpler than if you were sending a letter or meeting with the legislator. The person taking your call will understand your message more clearly.
- Be prepared to talk to legislative staff. Legislators tend to be less accessible by phone simply because of their hectic schedules and workloads.
- Before calling, prepare talking points. Briefly outline what you would like to say for example:

"My name is Mary Smith and I'm a civil engineer from West Hartford, Connecticut. I'm calling to urge Representative Larson to vote yes on H.B. 1000, the Mass Transit Improvement Act. Our roads are badly congested, and this costs the residents of West Hartford in terms of lost money and time spent in traffic. Improving our infrastructure benefits everyone in West Hartford. Additionally, capital improvements to our state's transit programs are essential to my business as a civil engineer."

Always Follow Up

Whether you arranged a meeting, met a legislator at an event, or simply passed each other on the street, take every opportunity to follow up with them. It has been said that showing up is half the job; the same applies to legislative involvement. We want legislators to remember ASCE and its issues, and repetition is a key to remembering. Following up lets legislators know that ASCE is interested. Simply dropping a legislator or staffer a note or email after a meeting can make a big difference in building a relationship. Finally, always remember to say thank you!

Measuring Success

Many factors contribute to the success of a government relations program. Keeping score of enacted legislation is only the beginning. Any effective government relations program takes time to build. The ultimate goal is to have your Section recognized and sought out by decision makers to help shape policy at all levels of government. Be patient, learn from your mistakes and move forward. Apathy is the true indicator of failure.

- Has your Section developed a strategic plan for government relations?
- Is your program supported by the Section leaders?
- Does the Section newsletter promote the Section's government relations activities?
- Has your Section reached out to state and local lawmakers?
- Do the volunteers understand the importance of government relations?
- Are volunteers participating in the program?
- Is the Section reaching out to other organizations to build coalitions?

If your Section can answer "Yes" to most of these questions then your program is on the right track.

A Section's or State Council's state government relations program needs to identify and pull together a variety of resources, including ASCE staff, volunteers, and outside professional services. A program's success depends on prioritizing and keeping pace with issues and knowing when staff and volunteers can handle an issue themselves or when outside professionals are needed. Taken together and effectively managed, these elements will help a Section operate an effective state government relations program.

This publication has been written for members of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) and is intended to serve as a guide for members who would like to get involved in the legislative and regulatory process at the state and local levels.

For more information regarding ASCE's state government relations program, please contact:

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Washington Office
101 Constitution Avenue, NW
Suite 375 East
Washington, D.C. 20001**

**PHONE: 202-789-7850
FAX: 202-789-7859
E-mail: govwash@asce.org**

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Sample Letter to a State Legislator

John Smith
10 Main Street
Anytown, New Jersey 07649

February 1, 2014

The Honorable Robert Jones
New Jersey Assembly
Trenton, NJ 08626

Dear Assemblyman Jones:

As a resident of Anytown, New Jersey and a civil engineer, I am writing to urge you to cosponsor A.B. 1, "The Improved State Infrastructure Financing Act." As you know, this bill would provide \$500 million more in desperately needed funding for our state's infrastructure. Projects that will be funded by this bill include local needs, such as the widening of Route 2 and improvements to Anytown's bus system and wastewater plant.

Investing in infrastructure translates not only into safer travel and less congestion, but increased productivity and greater economic growth. New Jersey has the highest number of vehicle miles driven for each mile of roadway in the country. I am sure you have experienced the effects of this level of density and congestion on a regular basis. This congestion is negatively impacting the efficient operation of business in our state. Congestion also impedes the movement of goods and services. In 1999, exports by New Jersey businesses totaled \$8.4 billion and impacted 242,000 jobs. Other states face these same issues.

We must invest in our transportation network in order to remain competitive. Businesses depend on an efficient transportation system to deliver goods and services. A.B. 1 provides a means to invest by utilizing dollars already obtained and earmarked for this use.

For these reasons, I strongly urge you to support A.B. 1 so that we can begin to address America's growing infrastructure needs.

Very truly yours,

John Smith, P.E.

Sample Press Release

YOUR SECTION/BRANCH Letterhead/Logo

News Release

XXX. X, 2014

Contact: Name /Phone / Email

Headline – *short, attention grabbing*

City, State – Paragraph 1: Clear, concise facts of news being shared: who, what where, when (i.e. today or yesterday).

“Quote from ASCE President or Other spokesperson on why this matters. This is the place to assert opinion,” said XXX, president, ASCE State section.

“Quote 2 from outside source further validating point (optional)” said XXX

Other relevant facts that did not fit in first paragraph.

Insert Section/Branch name here is a local unit of the American Society of Civil Engineers. Founded in 1852, ASCE represents more than 147,000 civil engineers worldwide and is America’s oldest national engineering society.

Note to Section/Branch Leaders: You may also wish to include any additional contact information that is not available on your letterhead here. For example, “For more information, visit. www.YOURSECTIONWEBSITE.org and follow us on @TWITTERNAME or friend us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/YOURPAGEURL.”

Sample Media Advisory

YOUR SECTION/BRANCH Letterhead/Logo

Media Advisory

XXX, XX, 2014

Contact: Name / Phone / Email

Headline – *short, attention-grabbing explanation*

City, State – Brief overview of event that will take place

- WHAT:** Title of event
- WHO:** Speakers, including anyone that media would be interested in hearing speak/interviewing
- WHEN:** DATE, TIME
- WHERE:** XXX Location, including any special directions on finding it [If the event is virtual and/or via teleconference, list the Web address and/or phone number.]
- WHY:** Share the significance of the event without giving away the news that will be unveiled For example: Traffic congestion and our children’s overcrowded schools are daily reminders that the state of our region’s infrastructure directly affects our economy and quality of life. With each passing day, City/Region/State’s aging infrastructure is struggling to meet the needs of our growing population, and the overburdened, and in many cases obsolete, condition makes our infrastructure far more susceptible to the ravages of natural and man-made disasters. Can we make the grade?

Insert Section/Branch name here is a local unit of the American Society of Civil Engineers. Founded in 1852, ASCE represents more than 147,000 civil engineers worldwide and is America’s oldest national engineering society.

Note to Editors: Local civil engineers are available for interviews. Press kits are available upon request. For more information, visit [INSERT APPROPRIATE URL HERE](#).

Factors to Consider

Task:

What is the nature of the task at hand for your lobbyist?

- Is this an ongoing, permanent assignment?
- Is it a finite task with a discrete goal?

What is the successful outcome of your advocacy campaign?

- Apply this to the motivation factor for your lobbyist.

How do you incentivize your lobbyist?

- Is there a success fee?
- Does your lobbyist work on retainer?
- If so, how do you keep your lobbyist on your issue?

Expertise:

What technical knowledge will your lobbyist need to accomplish the goal?

Does this campaign call for more of an articulate public presence or technical knowledge of state legislative procedures?

What are you looking for most in your lobbyist?

- A lobbyist with a link to a particular member?
 - ▶ The head of a committee.
 - ▶ A previous champion of your issue.
- A lobbyist with a lot of technical expertise?
- A lobbyist who is really well “connected” within the legislature?

Time:

Does your prospective lobbyist have the amount of time needed to focus on your issue?

What is the cost of the time needed?

Will you be dealing with the principal of the firm or with an associate?

- Ask to meet the entire lobbying team.
 - ▶ Evaluate your primary contact.

What kind of relationship do you want with your lobbyist?

- “Turnkey” relationship.
 - ▶ Someone who will just DO and report back with little or no involvement from client.
- Close knit working relationship.

Lobbyist reports to client:

- Frequency of reporting?
- Type of reports?
 - ▶ Non-structured oral “This is what is going on....”
 - ▶ Formal, written reports outlining progress, etc.

Personal Chemistry:

Look at hiring a lobbyist as you are hiring an employee.

- Will you get along with them? Do you “click”?
- What personal qualities are you looking for in your lobbyist?
 - ▶ Energy?
 - ▶ Intelligence?
 - ▶ Political savvy?

Sample Interview Questions

- How long have you been lobbying?
- What is the current legislative climate for this type of legislation?
- What kind of a track record do you have when it comes to our issues?
- Describe your style. Do you talk with every member of the committee before every vote? Do you utilize written as well as verbal communication?
- Describe potential strategies for passage of this type of legislation.
- How long do you think it will take to get the bill passed?
- How much do you charge and what service does that include?
- What are your expectations of us? Will we testify at all hearings, or will you sometimes handle it? Who will prepare the letters, testimony, and fact sheets?
- Will we be able to reach you by phone or e-mail at all times? How promptly can we expect a response?
- How will you keep us informed of hearings, problems, proposed amendments? Are you available to speak to our Board (or annual meeting)?
- Will you provide regular, written reports of the progress of our bill?
- Do you also handle media?
- Who are your other clients? (You may not want to be associated with someone who represents a client with whom you would not naturally align)
- (If an lobbyist represents a large clientele) How are you staffed and who will personally represent us?
- (If it is a small operation) How will you cover schedule conflicts (bills being heard in different committees at the same time, for example)? Which client takes precedence?
- Do you have relationships or conflicts with the lobbyists for our opposition?
- Are your fees payable only during the legislative session? What if a special session is called that does not include our type of legislation?