

Grassroots Advocacy 101

Scott Hobson, MPA
Director, Government Relations

The Basics

- “Advocacy” vs. “lobbying” vs. “political action”
- Why grassroots?
 - All politics is local – grassroots brings it home
 - Build RELATIONSHIPS with decision makers
 - Cut through the noise
 - Supports lobbying in Albany

Grassroots Advocacy Tactics - Influence

- Mass email campaigns
- Phone blitz/call-in campaigns
- Letters to the editor
- In-district meetings with lawmakers
- Attending political fundraisers
- Testifying at public hearings
- Advocacy Days
- Hosting legislative breakfasts/policy forums/meet and greets

Grassroots Advocacy Tactics – Relationship Building

- Just like in business, personal relationships are crucial
 - What common connections do you have? Same alma mater? Support the same charities? Kids attend the same school?
- Don't just reach out to elected officials when we want something – what else can we offer?
 - Attend a local event
 - Tour a member agency or customer business
 - Are there community events your agency could sponsor or participate in?
 - Expertise in insurance
- Grassroots builds the brand!

Grassroots Advocacy Tactics – Intelligence Gathering

- Learn who your legislative officials are – Senate, Assembly, County Exec, County legislators
 - State elected officials rarely “come out of nowhere” – they start at the local level!
 - Understand your district – what towns/cities are represented
- Sign up for your officials’ newsletters, follow on social media
 - What issues are important to them? How can this influence our approach?
- In meetings, ask about them
 - What issues do they care about? What issues affect the communities they represent

Case Study: 2019 UDAAP Bill

- Grassroots at every step of the way
 - Committees
 - Leadership
 - Key members
- Grassroots made a decisive difference
 - “phones ringing off the hook”
- Read more here:

<https://www.biginy.org/newsfeed/Lists/Posts/Post.aspx?ID=685>