

## **HIGHEST RANKING TYPES OF COMMUNICATIONS**

Taken from the Burson-Marsteller Report:  
Communications & Congress

1. Spontaneous letters from constituents
2. Telephone calls from constituents
3. Congressional Research Service
4. Articles in major daily newspapers
5. Editorials in major daily newspapers
6. Visits from constituents
7. Articles from constituents
8. Congressional Record
9. Editorials in district daily newspapers
10. Government publications
11. Orchestrated mail from constituents
12. Op-ed/opinion in major daily newspapers
13. Op-ed/opinion in local daily newspapers
14. Spontaneous letters from state officials
15. Spontaneous letters from interest groups
16. Telephone calls from friends
17. Telephone calls from state opinion leaders
18. Spontaneous letters from congressional leaders
19. Visits from lobbyists

## **RANKINGS OF COMMUNICATIONS ACCORDING TO SOURCE**

1. Constituents
2. Government
3. Print Media
4. Broadcast Media
5. Special Interests
6. Miscellaneous

## **MEETING WITH A LEGISLATOR**

1. First, call for an appointment. Do not just walk in and expect to see the legislator. In setting up the meeting, acknowledge what subjects you want to discuss. No one likes surprises. It can be embarrassing for everyone. This allows a legislator to prepare for the meeting or have the staff member who is responsible for the issue area(s) available. Remember, if you can't meet with the legislator, spend time with the staff.
2. Be organized. Have an agenda. This keeps the meeting from going astray. Remember, your meeting is creating an image to the legislators and their staffs about you or your group. Therefore, seriousness and knowledge of the issue is important.
3. If you are part of a group meeting, to insure a smooth presentation, have a pre-meeting to discuss which topics will be raised and who will present each. Choose one person to lead conversation and see that the agenda is followed.
4. Always be a good "listener." The legislator's comments and questions should provide insight into a strategy for follow-up materials or who to include in another meeting. Remember, the legislator needs his concerns and issues understood as much as you do. This does not mean you have to agree with his views or compromise your position.
5. Be on time and don't take more than the time allotted for the meeting unless the legislator initiates the continuation. Time demands on legislators are very great. Being organized will insure your discussion of the issue(s) will cover the critical aspects regardless of the time limitation.
6. Don't let the legislator evade the issue, and don't be afraid to ask for a commitment. An agenda will help to keep everyone on the subject, even the legislator. Don't be timid. Ask how the legislator stands on the issue or on specific aspects of the bill. Remember to be tactful. Hostility will only close the legislator's door to you on future issues. If he opposes your position, listen to his or her arguments, for it may provide insight into developing further issue strategy.
7. Don't be awed. Legislators are people just like you. Most of the time they are "generalists" on issues. It is highly likely they do not understand the issue as well as you. Discuss the issue with them, don't lecture or be defensive. Generally, the Legislative Assistants are generalists on issues, too.
8. Leave fact sheets. Make them concise. Relate impact of the program or legislation to the legislators own district or state.

## **BASIC STEPS TO ESTABLISH A GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS PROGRAM**

- I. Identify a Mission
  - \* Establish clear goals, objectives and boundaries for the program. Involve members to gain their commitment.
- II. Survey the membership for
  - \* Legislator contacts
  - \* Issue concerns
  - \* Interest in Government Relations Task Force
- III. Build a Network of Resources
  - \* Rely on national and state groups for organization assistance and legislative information.
  - \* Open lines of communication with friends and foes alike.
  - \* Publications
- IV. Structure the Process
  - \* Organize legislative committees.
  - \* Formalize the decision-making process and communication channels.
- V. Establish Policy Positions
  - \* Broad policy statements enable you to respond pro-actively and in a timely manner.
- VI. Set priorities
  - \* Limiting issues to those with a large economic impact and those with a good chance of enactment will help set a realistic agenda.
- VII. Pro-Active Issue Management
  - \* Evaluate emerging issues.
  - \* Create strategic plans to oppose or support legislation.
  - \* Build coalitions.
- VIII. Communicate
  - \* Provide legislative mailings or issue briefings to update members and request timely action.
  - \* Educate members about the legislative process and how to contact elected representatives.
  - \* Coordinate forums for members to meet with elected officials.
  - \* Conduct candidate interviews.
  - \* Fax, e-mail, networks.
- IX. Track Legislation
  - \* Create a standard tracking format.
  - \* Share this mechanism with members.
- X. Follow up
  - \* Track and publicize voting records.
  - \* Write "thank you" letters to legislators and active members.
  - \* Analyze the effectiveness or weakness of lobbying campaigns to improve future efforts.
  - \* Track and communicate contribution source of elected officials.