



Building Relationships with State Legislative and Congressional Offices

By Nolan Pleše, LOC Lobbyist

At the recent LOC Annual Conference in Bend, one of the breakout sessions provided the “Do’s and Don’ts” of building relationships with state legislative and U.S. congressional offices. Here are three key takeaways.

The first, and probably most important thing to remember: respect. Specifically, this means respect for the staff and interns just as much, or more, as respect for the legislator or congressional member. These folks are the key to success in any office and getting any asks completed. Burning a bridge with staff will make it significantly more difficult to communicate and receive key support in a timely manner.

Second, make sure you reach out early and often to both staff and legislator. Mid-session is too late. Start to build those relationships as soon as possible with both staff and members. They will be more responsive to your emails or calls when they know who you are. Coffee or lunch anyone?

Lastly, know what you need to ask for regardless of political affiliations. Your party does not matter as much as your community. State legislators and congressional members want to support their communities. Ignoring communities that may have opposing political beliefs is not a good strategy for them. There are policies you all will not agree on, but there are areas where you will. Do not let politics or ideology get in the way of reaching out to ask for your community’s needs. Staff and members do not prioritize party affiliation over helping a constituent or a constituent community.

If this all seems like common sense, it should. All of us expect the same, as does our business community and community members. In the end, it is about respect and taking the time to get to know one another. Because at the end of the day, it will pay off for you and your community. ■



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