



Andy Johnston, IOM
Vice President of Government Affairs
Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce
johnstona@grandrapids.org
616.822.1878
@AndyTJohnston

WORKING WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS



Topics to Cover

- Determining the why, who, when, etc
- Creating & communicating a legislative policy or position
- Other (fun?) stuff...what else?

Why?

“Ten people who speak
make more noise than ten
thousand who are silent.”

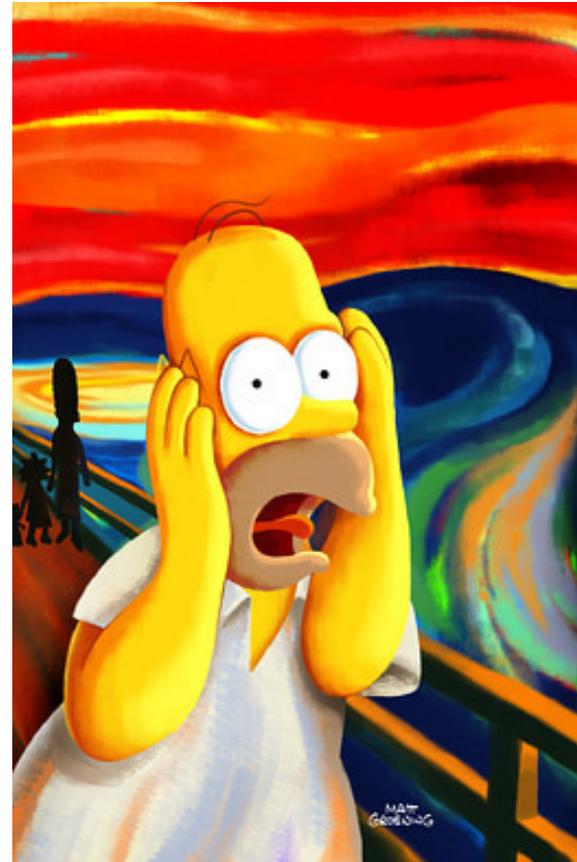
– Napoleon Bonaparte

“An informed and active
citizenry is the lifeblood of a
democracy.”



Why?

If we don't do it,
someone else will!



Why Advocacy?

Fighting for Prosperity

The Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce exists to provide its members with the confidence, connections, credibility and resources necessary to expand their reach in support of a **vibrant business environment and a thriving local economy that benefits everyone.**



Why Advocacy?

Fighting for Prosperity

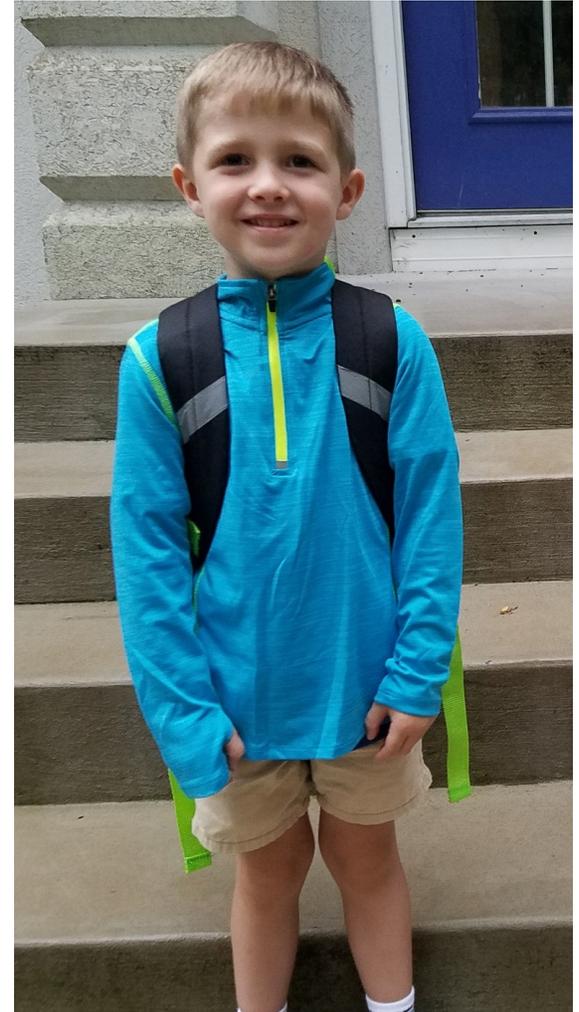
A Typical Day



Why?

lob·by·ist [lob-ee-ist] – noun: The person you hire to protect you from the person you elected.

What do you do?



What do you do?

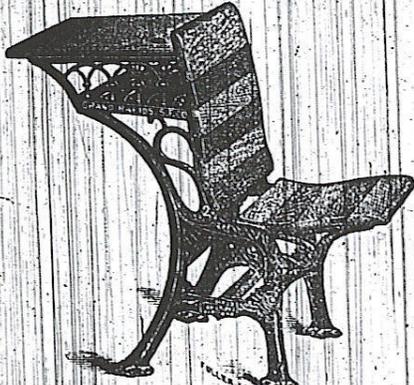
Simply put, lobbying is just telling a story—YOUR story.

It resonates!!

Don't let the word “lobbying” intimidate you. Lobbying is having a conversation with another person, providing them with your opinion, and persuading them to agree with you.

History – A Story

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Why invest in the Chamber for Advocacy?

Two Stories

Small and Big

Value of Engagement

“The Chamber helps craft the priorities of the West Michigan business community — and as a member I can have a seat at the table. And for the price of a membership, I have lobbyists working on my behalf.”

– Small Business Member



Why?

Strength in #s

Expertise

Age of Term Limits

Never Know When



Obstacles

“Our organization isn’t political.”

Neither are public policy statements. Issues are not partisan.

“It will jeopardize our tax status.”

Actually, it won’t.

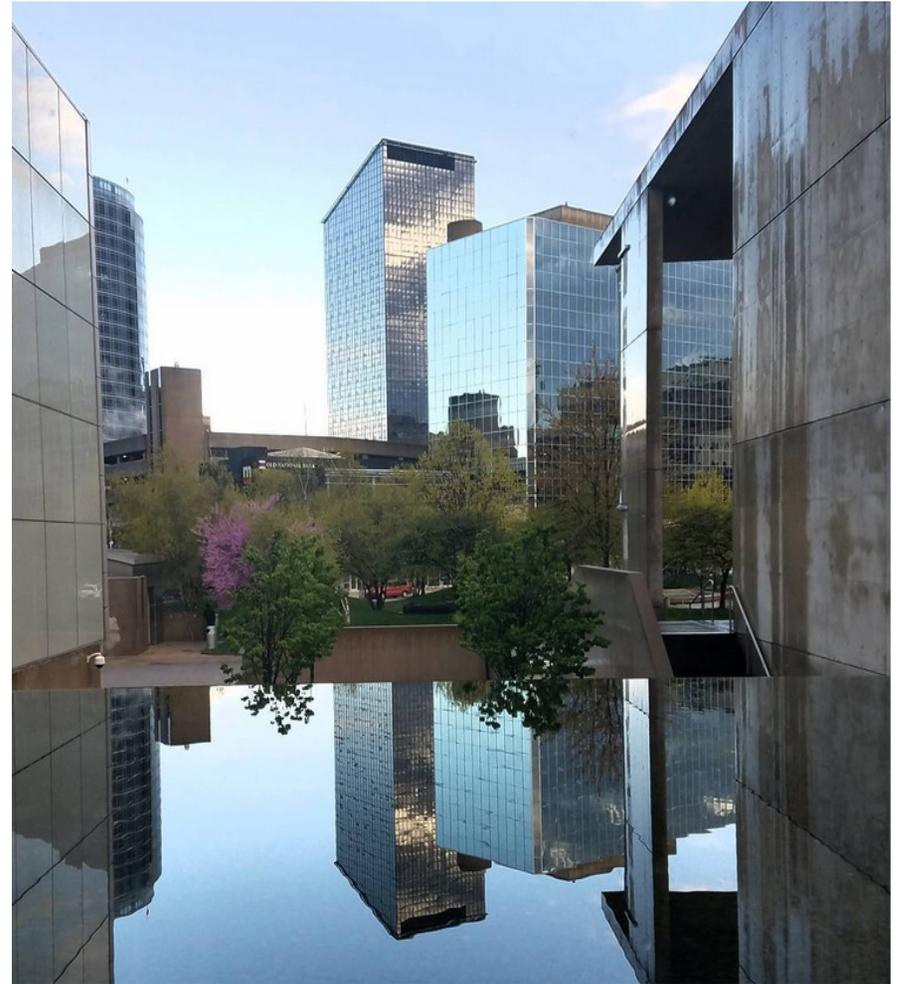
Obstacles

“Someone might get mad; we could lose XXXXX.”

If you lose access to an elected who is not helping you, what have you really lost?

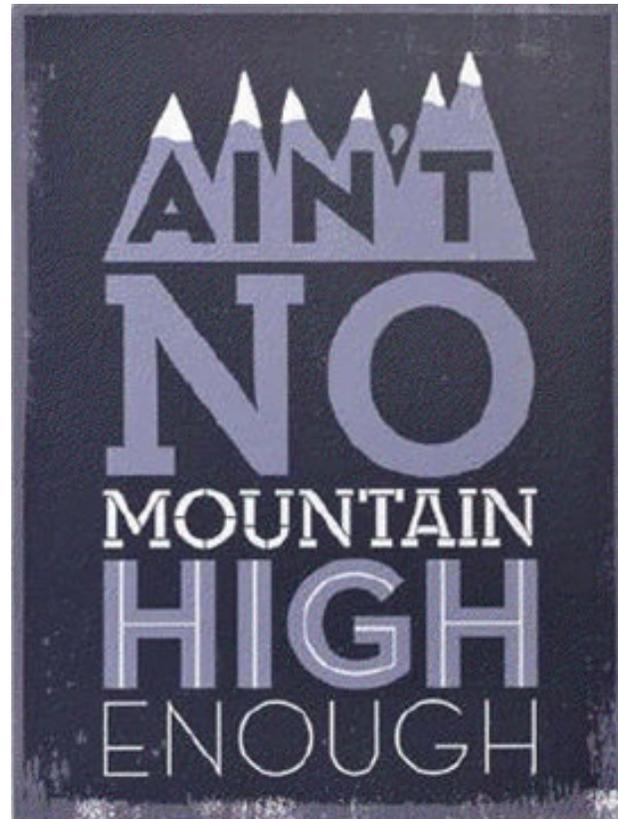
Why?

Support Mission
Better Community
Better Policy



Information

If you need me call me...



How & What

Set Your Agenda

Guiding Principles Set by the Board

Policy Process

Organizational Hats On!

Survey



How

- Board of Directors
- Votes on recs for legislative agenda
- Speaks with one voice
- Spokesperson / Surrogate



How

Advancing Priorities

Build Coalitions – Allies abound!

Age of Term Limits

Playing O and D

Nothing happening can be a win!



Where & Who

Local
State
Federal



Contacting Elected Officials

Before contacting any elected officials, take the time to **become knowledgeable on the issue which concerns you.**

Who is For/Against? Why?

What is the context?

Timing?



Contacting Elected Officials

Know when and where to contact a legislator.

Aside from Chamber events 😊, the best times to find a state legislator is in their office in Lansing on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays.

Coffee Hours



Contacting Elected Officials

Put together and email with a formal request to meet. It is best to focus on just one issue and be sure to include the following information to identify yourself:

- Identify the issue you want to discuss
- Identify anyone else who might join you

If you don't hear anything after sending the e-mail request, follow up the next day to make sure they received the formal request.

Wait another two or three days and then follow up with a phone call to see if there is time for you to meet with them.

Be flexible in scheduling. You might not get in right away. If it is urgent you speak with them because of a pending vote, clearly state that in both the formal request and follow up call. Be respectful and look to them for scheduling options.

Contacting Elected Officials

If you have genuine expert knowledge, share it with the legislator.

It will be welcomed.

No legislator can be an expert on everything

An important rule of thumb is to never underestimate their intelligence and never overestimate their knowledge.

Be constructive.

If a bill deals with a problem you admit exists, but you believe the bill is the wrong approach, explain what you believe is the right approach.

Contacting Elected Officials

It is usually a waste of time (for both of you) to lobby legislators who are already supporting your position.

Although they may be helpful in making suggestions for your lobbying efforts.

You do not need a crowd to lobby.

One or two, well-informed lobbyists on the same subject are more effective and less confusing than a large group gathered at the same time



Contacting Elected Officials

Make the most of the meeting.

- Clearly defined agenda so you don't waste your time or the legislator's time.
- Clearly state your position on the issue and ask them where they stand.
- If you have any documentation to reinforce your position, be sure to bring at least two copies of that with you (for the elected official and their legislative aide).
- Do not promise them anything in order to get them to vote a certain way.
- **Be sure to give a call to action** (vote yes/no on a bill; please consider introducing this legislation; please become a co-sponsor of this legislation, etc.)
- **Ask them to follow up with you on the issue**

Contacting Elected Officials

Do not “overkill.”

Most elected officials have many demands on their time. An elaborate sales job or long, emotional speech will not be appreciated.

They do, however, want your well-prepared facts and views, presented in a straightforward manner. Make sure their time is well spent in talking to you.

Stick to the issues that you came to discuss; don't wander into other issues.

Contacting Elected Officials

Disagree but don't be disagreeable

It's easy to get frustrated.

Let legislators explain their views—listen without interrupting—they often have input from many resources to which you may not have access.

Contacting Elected Officials

Don't demand a commitment before the facts are in.

- Give your legislator a fair chance to examine all sides of an issue.

Follow Up

Legislators are people too.



Contacting Elected Officials

Invite the lawmaker to visit your company.

- Lawmakers like to get out into their communities and participate in tours or visits to companies in their district.
- When the lawmaker comes to visit:
 - Spend a little time giving them an overview of the company
 - Provide them with a tour
 - If you are able, allow them to spend a few minutes talking with the employees
 - After the visit, be sure to follow up with a written thank you
 - **BRING YOUR BOARD MEMBERS**

Contacting Elected Officials

Provide written policy statements to all appropriate elected officials

Ask them to identify where they stand on your issues

Boldly explain why your issues are important to the health of your organization and community



Contacting Elected Officials

Build a network

Provide issue updates on a regular basis

Issue “Calls to Action” as necessary, include:

An issue summary

Contact information for elected officials

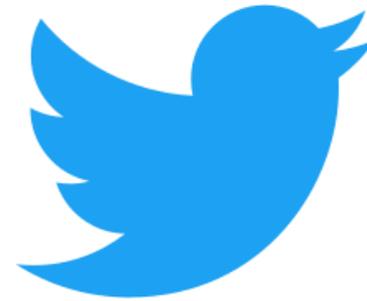
Timetable for action

Gather Intel or feedback from elected officials

***WARNING: Like puns, don't overuse!**

Contacting Elected Officials

**Follow on social
media**



Resources

Michigan Legislature - www.legislature.mi.gov

- Committee Meetings
- Sign up for Meeting Notifications
- Bills and analysis

www.senate.michigan.gov

house.michigan.gov



Resources

Bridge Magazine

Dome Magazine

Bridge

News & Analysis from The Center for Michigan

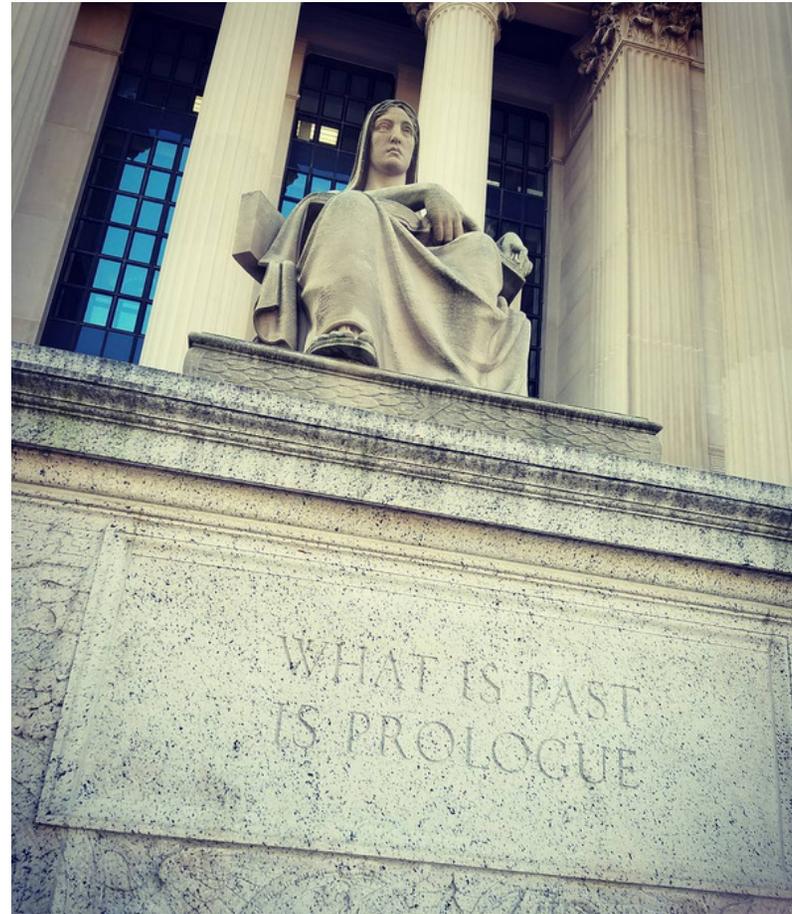
Next Steps?

Any case studies?

Sit in Front

Ballot Questions

Elections



**“THE BEST
WAY TO
PREDICT
THE FUTURE
IS TO
CREATE IT.”**