

HOW-TO GUIDE FOR CLUBS

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS



AAF AMERICAN ADVERTISING FEDERATION

Few areas of local advertising club operations are as important as government and legislative affairs. No other activity can so directly affect the way each and every member of the club does business. Everything from compensation to content to creative execution can be affected by government action. In spite of, or perhaps because of its importance, many advertising club members are intimidated by the thought of government affairs involvement. The purpose of this manual is to help reduce the anxiety level that many feel when dealing with lawmakers.

It is appropriate for AAF's local advertising clubs to take the lead in dealing with legislators and other government officials. As the unifying voice for advertising, the AAF binds the mutual interests of the many disciplines that together comprise the advertising industry. The AAF, through its nationwide network of advertising clubs, is the one advertising association most capable of influencing lawmakers at every level of government.

AAF's lobbying strategy is based on two well-established premises: first, that lawmakers respond best to their constituents; second, that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

A lawmaker is elected to represent the interests of his or her constituents. It makes sense then that any lawmaker who wants to keep his or her job will listen to the voters' views on issues. Conversely, if a lawmaker does not hear from constituents about an issue, he or she will assume that it is of little importance in his or her district. That is why it is vitally important that the advertising industry make its voice heard on any issues that impact the way we do business.

In the majority of situations, the advertising industry asks the government not to pass laws that would harm the industry and consumers (e.g. ad taxes or ad bans). While it is tempting to call a defeated ad tax bill a great victory—which it is—the greater victory comes when the legislature does not consider an ad tax at all. It stands to reason that when lawmakers understand advertising and its value to business and consumers, they will be less likely to support detrimental legislation. Educating lawmakers preemptively about the value of advertising and the advertising industry in their state or district is far more effective (and less stressful) than launching a full-scale lobbying effort against harmful legislation.

This manual concentrates on prevention, emphasizing what can be done by both advertising clubs to educate lawmakers about advertising, and club members about government relations. The key is to incorporate government relations, even if only in a small way, into each and every aspect of your club's operations.

This manual is composed of three sections. The first is a brief reminder of how laws are made. The second concentrates on the organization of advertising clubs. And the third describes the plan and how to put it into action.

The manual does not directly address how to respond to specific types of legislation. While some universal lobbying principles do exist, each situation is unique and demands a particular strategy. If a situation arises in your state or market, the AAF government relations staff will work with you every step of the way. However, by fully implementing the preventative measures outlined in this manual, you will greatly reduce the odds that you will have to develop such a plan.

Table of Contents

CHAPTER I

The Idea	4
Committee Consideration	4
Floor Consideration	4
Second Chamber Consideration	5
Conference Committee.	5
Executive Action.	5
Know the Government	5
Know the Players	6
Assess and Prioritize State Issues.	7

CHAPTER II

Appoint a Legislative Chair and Committee	7
Create a Budget Line Item for Government Affairs.	8
Educate Club Members About Government Relations	8
Establish a Call to Action Network.	9
Survey Membership for Contacts with Lawmakers.	9
Identify Advertising Industry Spokesmen and Spokeswomen.	10
Coordinate Advertising Industry Activity	10

CHAPTER III

Include Lawmakers in Local Advertising Club Activities.	11
Meet With Lawmakers	12
Courtesy Calls	12
Lobbying Visits.	12
Follow-Up	13
Conduct Special Legislative Events.	13
Legislative Dinner/Lunch/Reception	13
There Are a Few Things to Keep in Mind to Ensure Success	13
Debates	14
Advertising Seminars	14

APPENDIX

Lobbying Dos and Don'ts	15
AAF Legislative Contact Survey.	16

Chapter I

Before discussing how local AAF advertising clubs can become involved in government relations activities, it may be useful to have a brief refresher course in how laws are made. The following explanation is generally true in all of the states and the federal government. The federal government and every state but one have bicameral, or two- house, legislatures, consisting of a house of representatives (or assembly) and senate. Nebraska's legislature has one house.

Each state has its own rules of procedure that will affect the process. For example, all tax bills in Congress must originate in the U.S. House of Representatives. Many states have deadlines for committees to report bills in order to be eligible for consideration by the fully body. Despite these particulars, the process in each legislature is very similar.

Rewriting the rules of society is a major undertaking. Therefore, the journey from idea to law is designed to be a long one, with many opportunities for public comment and examination.

The Idea

All laws start with an idea. Someone must think that the law is necessary (remember—the idea, and new law, may actually be to repeal or revise an existing law). Laws may be suggested by a legislator, governor, state agency or a member of the public.

Transforming the idea into legislation can occur in many places. Bills may be written by a lawmaker's staff, legislative drafting offices, outside sources (including lobbying groups) or in a committee. In many states, committees meet between legislative sessions for the purpose of drafting legislation.

After the legislation, or bill, is drafted, a member of that chamber must introduce it in one of the legislative chambers. After introduction, the bill is assigned to one or more committees with jurisdiction over the subject matter.

Committee Consideration

The committee or committees with jurisdiction hold hearings on proposed legislation. This is the first opportunity in the legislative process for interested parties to comment on proposed laws. In most instances, any member of the public may request to testify before the committee. It is not unusual for a committee to hold multiple hearings on a complicated, far-reaching or controversial piece of legislation.

After receiving public comment, the committee will “mark up” the bill. This is when the committee members debate the merits of the proposal and consider amendments. Once all of the amendments to the legislation have been accepted or rejected, the committee votes on the final product.

If the committee votes to pass the legislation, it is forwarded to the next committee with jurisdiction, where the process is repeated. When the last committee votes to pass the bill (or if only one committee has jurisdiction) the bill is forwarded to the full legislative chamber.

Procedures vary when legislation receives more negative votes in committee than positive votes. In many states a negative vote kills the bill, and it receives no more consideration. In some states it is forwarded to the next committee or full chamber with a negative recommendation. It may still become law, but the odds are usually longer.

Floor Consideration

After being sent to the full legislative chamber by the committee, or committees, the bill is debated on the floor of the chamber. This is another opportunity for lawmakers to amend the legislation.

In the U.S. House of Representatives and many state legislative bodies, legislation must be “granted a rule” before it can be considered. The rule will state the limits of the debate and what amendments may be considered. Because it can set the terms of debate and possible variations, the Rules Committee is very powerful.

After debating and voting on all amendments, the full chamber votes on the final bill. If the legislation receives a no vote, it is dead and removed from the legislative docket. If the bill passes, it is forwarded to the second legislative chamber.

Second Chamber Consideration

When the bill is forwarded to the second chamber the entire process is repeated, from committee to a full chamber vote with the same opportunities for comment, debate and amendments.

It is possible for both chambers to act simultaneously if identical legislation is introduced in both bodies.

Conference Committee

After legislation has passed both chambers of the legislature, it is forwarded to a conference committee, which consists of select legislators from each chamber.

The conference committee is charged with resolving any differences that may exist in the legislation as passed by each chamber. The discrepancies may exist due to differences in the bill as originally drafted for each chamber or because of amendments added in committee or on the floor. Of course, if the legislation passed by each chamber is identical, the conference committee is unnecessary.

After the conference committee has finished its work, the bill is sent to both chambers for approval. Both bodies must pass the legislation. If one chamber does not agree with the conference committee’s version of the bill, it goes back to conference. Both chambers must pass the bill in identical form before it can become law. In those instances where the two chambers cannot agree, the legislation dies.

After both chambers pass the bill, it is forwarded to the executive branch.

Executive Action

In every state except North Carolina, the governor has the authority to approve or veto legislation forwarded by the legislature. The president has this authority also.

If the legislation is approved, the measure becomes law.

If the legislation is vetoed, the legislature has the power to override the veto. This usually requires a two-thirds majority in each chamber. If the legislature does not override the veto, the measure dies.

The executive must act within a specified period of time. In some states, if the executive does not act, the legislation automatically becomes law. In other states and at the federal level, if the executive does not act, the bill dies.

Know the Government

In order to maximize government affairs effectiveness, it is useful to have some basic background information on your state legislature. Most information can be obtained by visiting your state government’s official website.

First and foremost, know your state laws. Some states have adopted very strict lobbying statutes that can affect the activities of volunteers. The types of issues to resolve are:

- Who is required to register as a lobbyist?
- What reporting requirements exist for anyone engaging in contact with lawmakers?
- Are there any special laws regarding fundraising or political contributions?

The secretary of state, legislative information office, in-state association and lobbyists, and the AAF can all help obtain the answers.

Next, what are the dates of the legislative session? Some legislatures meet full time, all year round. Others are limited to much shorter sessions. In a handful of states, the legislature only meets every other year.

Are there any special rules regarding legislation in the state? For instance, must tax laws originate in the state house or assembly? Do any deadlines exist for consideration of legislation?

Keep in mind that experienced legislators can often “bend” or use the rules to their advantage. For example, a deadline for introduction of legislation does not necessarily preclude amending another piece of legislation with a proposal not previously introduced as legislation.

Know the Players

Knowing how laws are made is just the first step. The key to a successful government relations program is knowing who makes the laws. Who are the key players?

The very first step in knowing the legislative players is obtaining a legislative directory. A good directory will have each lawmaker’s district, capitol address, phone number and committee assignments, as well as information on committees and legislative leadership.

Directories can usually be obtained through the legislature. In many states, private organizations publish excellent directories as well.

Use the directory to determine which legislators represent your advertising club’s market. Legislative representation is based on population. The larger the market, the more legislators there are. Most states have websites that will allow you to type in particular addresses to see who your specific representatives are at every level of government.

Passing legislation is a multistep process. The earlier in the process an industry makes its views known, the greater its odds of successfully influencing the process (either by having favorable language included in the legislation or by defeating it all together).

The first step in the legislative process is the committee (or committees) with jurisdiction over an issue. Lawmakers on the committee are the first to consider legislation and usually play the greatest role in shaping the legislation. If the desired result is killing the bill, the committee is the best place to do it. If a bill makes it to the full house or senate, it often has momentum and is harder to derail. Working with committees has the added advantage of narrowing the universe of target lawmakers.

Tax-writing committees handle advertising and service tax issues. These committees go by different names in different states. Common names are Ways and Means, Taxation or Finance.

Other advertising issues are considered by commerce or business committees (general advertising/business issues, ad bans or restrictions), health committees (tobacco, alcohol, or food advertising issues), and environment or transportation committees (outdoor advertising issues).

Other target lawmakers include the legislative leadership (speaker of the house, president of the senate, majority and minority party leaders in each chamber, majority and minority whips in each chamber) and the governor and his/her key staff. In some states there might be lawmakers with particular influence who do not hold a formal position of power.

Professional lobbyists and other political veterans can help determine which lawmakers are critical to advertising issues.

These key committees should be the first target audience of the advertising industry. Each local advertising club should focus on committee members from its market. Lawmakers should all be educated as to the positive aspects of advertising to the economy and consumers (their constituents). As such, they would be less likely to favor legislation harmful to advertising.

Lawmakers should also be educated about the advertising club in their district (the number of members, businesses represented, public service efforts, etc.). The club should be offered as a resource. Ideally, your relationship should be such that when a piece of legislation affecting the advertising industry is introduced, the lawmaker will contact the federation to learn the industry's position. We will discuss later how to establish relationships with lawmakers.

Each advertising club should coordinate with others in the state to ensure that all target lawmakers are accounted for. If a target lawmaker represents a district with no local advertising federation, outreach should be made to advertising businesses in the district to support the advertising industry's legislative program.

While special emphasis is placed on target lawmakers, do not ignore the others representing your market. Often, nontargeted lawmakers are influential with targeted lawmakers and will help argue the industry's position. The contacts also are valuable if the bill is voted on by the full legislature.

Assess And Prioritize State Issues

Prior to each legislative session, it is useful to assess the legislative agenda in an attempt to determine what issues affecting advertising may be considered. While this is an inexact science, it can help to prioritize the advertising club's legislative plan. News reports, contacts with lawmakers and lobbyists and past legislative activity can all provide insights. Most advertising issues fall into one of two broad categories: taxes or First Amendment.

Any public discussion of tax issues should serve as a warning. Proposals to expand the sales tax to advertising have been justified by the need to raise money to balance the budget; by the need to offset revenue loss from other tax cuts, such as cuts in property taxes or the sales tax rate; and by an attempt to make the tax structure more "fair."

First Amendment issues generally involve attempts to restrict the content of advertising. Sometimes advertising for certain products (tobacco, alcoholic beverages, casinos and/or lotteries, etc.) are targeted. Other proposals may try to restrict the types of claims being made about a product, for example health or environmental claims.

As discussed earlier, different committees of jurisdiction handle different issues. Knowing what issues are likely to be considered in a legislative session can help when considering which lawmakers the advertising club should seek to contact.

Chapter II

Appoint a Legislative Chair and Committee

The first and most important step in preparing a local advertising club for playing an effective role in government relations is the appointment of a legislative chair.

The ideal qualifications for an effective legislative chair include commitment, credentials, credibility and connections. He or she should have connections with industry leaders, lawmakers and lobbyists. The legislative chair needs the credibility that comes with support and respect of club officers and industry leaders and the credentials of understanding industry positions.

Above all else, the legislative chair must have the interest in politics and government relations and the commitment to devote time and energy to strengthening the club's program.

To ensure continuity, the AAF recommends that a legislative chair be appointed for at least a two-year term. The legislative chair is not a position well-suited to rotation through board positions. Not all board members have the interest in or comfort level with government relations necessary to fulfill the obligations of the position. The issues are simply too important to be left to a caretaker who will do little to advance the industry's interests.

Next, consider appointing a legislative vice chair and legislative committee. This will provide the federation with the opportunity to groom new leadership, spread the workload, provide support and “foot soldiers” for government relations and increase member involvement.

The committee should meet on a regular basis to discuss current issues and ongoing federation activities. Subcommittees or task forces can be assigned to work on specific projects.

Create a Budget Line Item for Government Affairs

Many of the activities suggested in this manual will entail some expense to the local club. These include mailing expenses, travel, etc. In most instances, the expense will be minor. Some activities may actually generate revenue. The exact amount will be dependent on anticipated activity during the upcoming budget year.

When possible, it is wise to budget a little extra for unanticipated legislative emergencies. Building a war chest over time can help provide a measure of financial security.

It may be helpful to earmark particular sources of income for government relations. Methods of fundraising are limited only by imagination and state laws. Some possibilities are:

- Solicit voluntary contributions from club members, allied associations and/or advertising businesses in the market.
- Have a special dues assessment earmarked for government relations.
- Devote all or a percentage of income from a fundraising event to government relations.

Consider working with other AAF advertising clubs in the state. Major expenses such as hiring a professional lobbyist when necessary are more manageable when shared by multiple parties.

Once your legislative committee is in place and has a budget, a number of steps should be taken to prepare the club for action. Educate members about government relations issues, establish a system of quickly communicating with members, determine who among the club members knows lawmakers and find a pool of industry spokesmen and spokeswomanen.

Educate Club Members About Government Relations

It is important that the general membership of the local advertising club be continually educated about the existence of government relations issues and their potential impact upon the industry, their companies, and their jobs. This education process has multiple benefits; members are better prepared should a legislative crisis occur and their active involvement is needed, and it will help build continuing support for government relations activities.

Making government relations a part of every club activity can do this.

Information on legislative activity in other states and the federal government can be found in AAF's Government Report newsletter or by calling AAF government relations staff in Washington or e-mailing government@aaf.org.

The legislative chair should be on the agenda of every meeting of the club board of directors. Reports should include a brief update of issues in the state and federal government, as well as the status of ongoing government relations programs within the club. If nothing is happening in your state, the report can include issues from other states—reminding members that the threats continue to exist.

The legislative chair should give periodic reports at membership meetings. Members need to be reminded that threats to advertising always exist. The report also reinforces the club's commitment to government relations.

A government relations column should also be in every issue of the club newsletter. Articles can update members on local programs as well as legislative activity.

Establish a Call-to-Action Network

In the event of a legislative crisis, it will be necessary to communicate with the club members as quickly and accurately as possible. It is essential that a Call to Action Network be established and tested prior to a crisis. During a legislative emergency days, hours and even minutes count. Wasting time alerting the club membership could be the difference between winning and losing an issue.

It is a good idea to establish two networks: one for the legislative committee, board of directors and “key contacts,” and one for the entire membership.

It is best to alert members by e-mail and follow up with a phone call. E-mails allow for precise information, status of the legislation, arguments for or against needed action, and addresses or telephone numbers.

You can set up an email contact list through any variety of services online that will allow you to quickly disseminate information to your membership. Social media platforms are also a great way of distributing information quickly, and allow you to have real-time conversations with people interested in acting on urgent issues.

Another option is to establish a text, phone, or e-mail tree. The legislative chair texts, calls, or e-mails an alert to every member of the legislative committee and/or board of directors. If the board is very large, the legislative chair may arrange to have the president or another officer help. Each member of the committee and/or board then faxes or e-mails the alert to preassigned members of the federation. If necessary in large local clubs, these members repeat the process to their preassigned contacts.

When drafting a legislative alert (as well as letters to lawmakers), the message should be as simple and direct as possible. To avoid confusion, each communication should contain only one issue. Explain precisely the situation and the action requested. Provide all necessary information, including arguments for or against the legislation and phone numbers and addresses of the lawmakers to be contacted.

Survey Membership for Contacts with Lawmakers

Many factors go into an elected representative’s decision when formulating a position on an issue—political philosophy and impact of the proposal on the state and/or nation are important considerations. However, for most elected officials the most important factor is impact of the legislation on their district. In the final analysis, legislators represent the citizens who live in their district. And those citizens, if they make their positions known, can have a tremendous impact on how a lawmaker will vote on any given issue.

Elected legislators listen to their constituents—their bosses. Like anyone else, most tend to listen even closer to people they know. It is impossible, therefore, to overstate the value of surveying the club membership to determine who has contacts with lawmakers that may be of benefit to the advertising industry.

Any contact with a lawmaker is important, from close, personal friends to casual acquaintances. The survey is likely to find neighbors, school classmates or business associates of the lawmaker. Chances are some club members go to the same church or have children in little league with lawmakers’ children. The possibilities are endless.

A sample survey is included in the appendix of this manual. There are two primary methods of surveying the membership. Each method has advantages and disadvantages.

The survey can be distributed, filled out and returned at membership meetings. This has the advantage of immediate response but can miss members who do not attend the meeting.

Or the survey can be mailed or e-mailed to every member of the club. This has the advantage of universal coverage. However, it can be difficult to ensure response and takes more time to compile the information.

When surveying the membership, be sure to include a list of all local, state and federal lawmakers representing the market. Have each member report his/her business and home address. Many people work in one legislative district but live in another. In a letter-writing campaign, this doubles their influence.

Once this information has been compiled, it should be organized. Make master lists of which club members know which lawmakers. This way, if a lawmaker needs a special contact, it is a simple matter to determine which members can most effectively make the contact.

Report the results to the AAF headquarters in Washington, D.C. The results can be valuable in furthering the advertising industry's national lobbying program.

Remember that your advertising club's membership is constantly changing and each election brings new lawmakers. It is essential therefore that the club membership be surveyed for legislative contacts on a regular basis. At a minimum, a survey must be conducted after every election.

Compare the contacts with the list of target lawmakers in your market and state. If there are target legislators for whom no known contacts exist, develop a plan for establishing contacts. See the section on educating lawmakers for suggestions on how to do this.

Identify Advertising Industry Spokesmen and Spokeswomen

Identify a pool of industry professionals to draw upon for use as witnesses during legislative hearings and during meetings with legislators. Gain commitments from them to speak when possible. A hearing or meeting will not fit into everybody's schedule.

The cadre of spokesmen/women should be as diverse as possible, representing all aspects of the advertising industry—clients, agencies, media, suppliers and academia. Vary the size of businesses represented. The CEO of a well-known company providing many in-state jobs will be noticed. So too will the one-person jingle writer who can show that a five percent ad tax markup will make him less competitive with rivals in other states.

Look also to geographic diversity. Find spokesmen/women from as many legislative districts as possible, particularly districts represented by target lawmakers.

Use the legislative contact surveys when looking for spokesmen/women. Like anyone else, lawmakers tend to listen sympathetically to people they know.

Coordinate Advertising Industry Activity

It is vital that each local advertising club legislative chair be in contact with his/her counterpart at other clubs across the state and with allied organizations in the state. Coordinating activities will simultaneously make the legislative chair's job easier by spreading the work load and increase effectiveness of the advertising industry's government relations programs.

Not coordinating activities could have disastrous consequences. If lawmakers are intent on attacking advertising – through an ad tax or other proposal – and see the industry is not unified, they may be able to exploit that weakness and see their proposals enacted into law.

Each legislative chair in the state should speak on a regular basis to each of his/her counterparts in the state. It is important to share legislative intelligence, as well as update the other clubs of government relations programs being conducted within each market. An annual conference call among all legislative chairs in the state would be a valuable supplement to individual conversations.

Even better would be an annual meeting during the spring or fall district conference. Meeting at the district conference has the added benefit of raising the awareness of government relations among club and district leaders. Of course, this would take an additional budget commitment by the club and districts.

It is important to work closely with state associations representing other segments of the advertising industry, such as the broadcasters' and newspaper publishers' association. In most instances, your advertising club will share members with these associations.

Quite often these associations will have a professional lobbyist on staff or a retainer who can provide valuable information and advice.

Look to the club membership when looking for potential allies. Chances are if a club member is also the member of another industry association, that association is likely to be sympathetic to advertising issues. Be aware, however, of the association's other issues of concern. For example, retailers generally oppose advertising taxes, but many place a higher priority on keeping the sales tax rate low. Advertising taxes are just one of many tax issues of concern to chambers of commerce.

Chapter III

Once you have organized your legislative committee and begun surveying and educating your membership, the next step is to begin educating your lawmakers about the advertising industry and local advertising club. The very first step should be to add each elected official from your market to the club's newsletter. This is an easy way of reminding the lawmaker of the federation and industry on a regular basis. Further education efforts can be done in one of two ways: bring the lawmaker to the industry or take the industry to the lawmaker.

Include Lawmakers in Local Advertising Club Activities

One means of incorporating government relations into every local advertising club activity is to include lawmakers in club functions. This has the double benefit of exposing the lawmaker to the advertising club and advertising industry, as well as reminding the members of the club's government relations program.

Whenever possible, take advantage of the legislative contact survey results when inviting a legislator to participate in an advertising club event. A lawmaker is more likely to respond positively if the invitation comes from someone he or she knows. Emphasize that the meeting is an opportunity to meet many influential members (constituents) of the advertising industry and business community.

Area lawmakers can be utilized as speakers for membership meetings. Most will be eager to accept an invitation to talk to a quality group of business leaders and constituents.

However, lawmakers need not be featured speakers. Many AAF advertising club invite an area lawmaker to attend each membership meeting as an honored guest. The lawmaker is seated at the head table and introduced but does not speak. Once again, this is an attractive opportunity for the lawmaker to meet a large group of constituents from an important industry. If a legislator is invited to attend a meeting, it is very important that a club leader be given the assignment of introducing him or her to the club members. Make sure the lawmaker is never abandoned during the meeting! Such an invitation may be tied to a smaller meeting between the lawmaker and a smaller group of industry leaders.

Similarly, all areas lawmakers should be invited to attend the club's ADDY® Awards show. The ADDYs highlight the best of advertising in the market. They are a tangible demonstration that there is a strong, high caliber advertising industry in the legislator's district. This may require a budget item.

Speaking of the ADDYs, invite one or more area lawmaker to participate in the show as a presenter. This further reinforces the association between the legislator and advertising industry.

Legislators should be invited to attend all meetings or events that highlight the local club's public service activities and campaigns. AAF advertising clubs conduct many programs that directly benefit their communities. Lawmakers want and need to know about these activities.

Meet with Lawmakers

Meetings with lawmakers can generally be categorized in one of two ways. The first is a courtesy call to educate the lawmaker about the advertising industry and club. The other is a lobbying visit to ask the lawmaker to support or oppose a particular piece of legislation.

Some general guidelines apply. The model advertising industry delegation represents the breadth of the industry. For example, it might consist of four people, one representative each from a client, agency, media and supplier. Ideally, the businesses represented would vary in size. The goal is to illustrate the advertising industry (singular) is in reality the advertising industries (plural).

Each of the participants in the meeting should be a constituent of the lawmaker or represent a company with ties to the district, such as offices or employees living in the district.

This is another instance where legislative contact survey results can be used. Arranging a meeting may be easier if the request comes from someone the lawmaker knows. Additionally, the industry message is more powerful when delivered by a source the legislator knows.

Regardless of the purpose of the meeting, the participants should meet beforehand to discuss the agenda. Each industry representative should know the points that he or she is to make. This will ensure that the time is used efficiently and that all important points are made.

Courtesy Calls

It is appropriate for industry representatives to make courtesy calls on lawmakers even when no legislation directly affecting the industry is under consideration. However, there are many demands on a legislator's time—particularly when the legislature is in session—so keep the visit short and to the point.

There are two goals to a meeting of this kind. First, give the lawmaker a basic education about the many voters from the advertising club and industry in his or her district.

Second, offer the club as a resource on advertising issues. If a piece of advertising-related legislation is considered, the lawmaker should know to call the club to get the industry's position. He or she may not always agree, but knowing the industry can increase the odds of support.

Lobbying Visits

The second type of visit is more focused. The purpose of this meeting is to ask the lawmaker to support or oppose a particular piece of legislation. Arguments will vary depending upon the specific situation. AAF staff can help prepare the presentation. However, the following guidelines will apply.

Prior to a meeting, all participants should meet to plan the presentation. Prepare an informal agenda to ensure that all important points are covered. Each industry spokesman should be given specific items to present. Stay focused on the issue at hand. Do not confuse the legislator by discussing other unrelated matters.

After making the presentation, ask for the sale. Once participant must specifically ask the lawmaker to support the industry's position. He or she may not commit to a position when asked but will be very unlikely to commit if not asked.

Provide the lawmaker with a brief position paper summarizing the industry's position and arguments. Include the name of the organization and a contact person.

Follow-Up

Following all meetings, each participant should write to the lawmaker thanking him or her for the meeting. If any promises were made to provide additional information, do so promptly.

Conduct Special Legislative Events

A great way of advancing a club's government relations program is to conduct special events devoted to legislative issues, which serve to bring together lawmakers and advertising industry professionals. Most of these programs can be done by a single local club or on a statewide basis in conjunction with other advertising clubs in the state. Remember to conduct the events in a nonpartisan manner.

Legislative Dinner/Lunch/Reception

Hold an event such as a dinner, lunch or reception in the state capital (it may even be possible to hold the event in the capitol building). Invite all members of the legislature to attend, as well as the governor, lieutenant governor and other important lawmakers. Bring in advertising club members from across the state to attend the function as well.

A featured speaker can either highlight the many positive aspects of the advertising industry, including economic benefits and public service, or appeal to the lawmakers' self-interest and invite a speaker to talk about political marketing. Perhaps a reel of public service spots—highlighting in-state work of the sponsoring club—can be shown. If the event is a reception with no formal program, place examples of public service work around the room. Consider also having a public service video loop showing in one corner.

Similar events have been conducted in many states with great success. For example, the Montana Advertising Federation has had attendance by well over half the legislature, the governor and lieutenant governor at its legislative dinner held in the state capital of Helena. The AAF advertising clubs in Florida conduct an annual “fly-in” to Tallahassee. In addition to holding a lunch for legislators, club members walk the halls of the capitol to meet their elected representatives.

Infinite variations on the basic format can be used to maximize the event in your state. A single local advertising club can also conduct an event for all of the elected representatives from a single market. Such an event could also include city and/or county officials. Or, consider a simple panel discussion during a club luncheon. No matter the approach, take advantage of the ability to create an event that makes sense for your market, educate your members and engage those who impact the industry.

There Are a Few Things to Keep in Mind to Ensure Success

First and most important, investigate the state ethics laws. Some states severely limit what gifts may be given to lawmakers. Meals can be considered gifts under some state laws. Other states have very strict reporting requirements. For the sake of the club and lawmakers, ensure that the event conforms to state law.

Use legislative contact survey data when inviting legislators. Lawmakers are more likely to attend when invited by someone they know and respect.

Try to get commitments early from one or more key legislators to attend. These commitments—probably from lawmakers friendly to the advertising industry—can then be marketed to enhance the credibility of the event and encourage attendance from the legislator's colleagues.

A friendly legislator may even be willing to serve as an informal “co-sponsor” of the event and provide some assistance. Important roles for the “co-sponsor” could be building legislator attendance or helping reserve a room in the capitol building.

Plan the date carefully. If the event is in the state capitol, ensure the legislature is in session and the invited guests will be in town. Likewise, if the event is in a local market away from the capital, choose a date when the legislature is in recess and lawmakers will be at home in their districts.

Debates

Many AAF advertising clubs have had success sponsoring candidate debates or forums during election season. These events can be held for federal, state or local elections. Depending on the size of the market and offices up for election, the event may feature candidates for one or more offices.

Events conducted for the public at large can raise the profile of the advertising federation, as well as help fulfill its public service mission. The event will have the corollary benefit of exposing lawmakers (one of the participants will win) to the club and giving him or her positive exposure to the advertising industry.

Advertising Seminars

Consider conducting a seminar or publishing a booklet for lawmakers and candidates, tutoring them on how to use advertising in their own campaigns. This has the double benefit of educating lawmakers and potential lawmakers about advertising and generating goodwill to the industry by giving them something tangible they can use. It is extremely important that the seminar or booklet be offered on a nonpartisan basis. The advertising club cannot and should not be perceived as favoring one political party over the other.

Appendix: Lobbying Dos and Don'ts

There are a great many practical rules—dos and don'ts—that an effective lobbyist should follow. Some are a matter of ethics, some law, and some just plain common sense, but all will help ensure long-term lobbying success.

- Do tell the truth. Never lie to a lawmaker or misrepresent the facts. A lobbyist's goal is to establish himself or herself as a reliable source of information. As such, integrity is his or her most valuable resource. Once lost in a legislator's eyes, it can never be regained.
- Do know your opponent's position as well as you know your own. Understanding the other side of an issue is essential to countering their arguments.
- Do keep your promises. If you say you are going to do something, do it promptly. If you can't, explain why.
- Do be helpful to legislators whenever you can. If you can help with a constituent problem or provide information, do it. Don't expect quid pro quo.
- Do keep position papers short and concise. Legislators don't have the time or inclination to read a complete history of each of the hundreds of issues they deal with every legislative session.
- Don't ever make a legislator or the legislature look bad. Legislators are like elephants (and not just the Republicans): they never forget.
- Don't burn your bridges or take defeat personally. Today's opponent may be tomorrow's ally.
- Don't complicate issues or confuse legislators. Know what your position (singular) is and present it well.
- Don't threaten legislators. Promises to vote and/or work for a legislator's opponent go a long way to ensuring that he or she will not support the industry on this—or any other—issue.
- Don't try to bribe legislators. It's illegal. Campaign contributions (when done legally) are a wonderful way of showing support to sympathetic lawmakers. However, do not expect him or her to vote your way because you gave money.
- Don't embarrass a legislator by discussing his motives with others. If he or she gives a commitment that was difficult to make, keep it to yourself.
- Don't let your ego show. In a relationship between a lobbyist and a legislator there is room for only one ego—the legislator's.
- Don't waste your time on fruitless debate with known adversaries. As the saying goes: never try to teach a pig how to sing—it wastes your time and annoys the pig.

AAF Legislative Contact Survey

Your Name: _____
 Company: _____
 Home Address: _____
 City/State/Zip: _____
 Business Address: _____
 City/State/Zip: _____
 Home Phone: _____
 Business Phone: _____
 E-mail: _____
 Local Advertising Club: _____

1. Who is your member of congress?

How well do you know him or her?

☐ Well ☐ Slightly ☐ Do not know

Is he or she a:

☐ Personal contact ☐ Business contact ☐ Political contact

2. Who is the member representing your business address?

How well do you know him or her?

☐ Well ☐ Slightly ☐ Do not know

Is he or she a:

☐ Personal contact ☐ Business contact ☐ Political contact

3. Who is your state senator?

How well do you know him or her?

☐ Well ☐ Slightly ☐ Do not know

Is he or she a:

☐ Personal contact ☐ Business contact ☐ Political contact

4. Who is the state senator representing your business address?

How well do you know him or her?

☐ Well ☐ Slightly ☐ Do not know

Is he or she a:

☐ Personal contact ☐ Business contact ☐ Political contact

5. Who is your state representative?

How well do you know him or her?

☐ Well ☐ Slightly ☐ Do not know

Is he or she a:

☐ Personal contact ☐ Business contact ☐ Political contact

6. Who is the Representative representing your business address?

How well do you know him or her?

☐ Well ☐ Slightly ☐ Do not know

Is he or she a:

☐ Personal contact ☐ Business contact ☐ Political contact

7. Do you know your U.S. Senator(s)?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Which one(s)?

#1: _____

#2: _____

How well do you know senator #1?

☐ Well ☐ Slightly ☐ Do not know

Is he or she a:

☐ Personal contact ☐ Business contact ☐ Political contact

How well do you know senator #2?

☐ Well ☐ Slightly ☐ Do not know

Is he or she a:

☐ Personal contact ☐ Business contact ☐ Political contact

8. Are you acquainted with any other state or federal officials, such as the governor, officials of a federal or state agency, or political party officers?

Name(s): _____

Position(s): _____

How well do you know them?

☐ Well ☐ Slightly ☐ Do not know

Is he or she a:

☐ Personal contact ☐ Business contact ☐ Political contact

9. Are you willing to communicate with your personal contacts regarding advertising issues?

☐ Yes ☐ No

10. Given the appropriate background information, are you willing to contact your elected representatives immediately regarding advertising issues?

☐ Yes ☐ No

11. Given the appropriate background information, are you willing to communicate with your elected representatives regarding advertising issues?

☐ Yes ☐ No



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