

Making Your Best Case when Advocating

COASTAL SUMMIT

Derek Brockbank, Executive Director, ASBPA

asbpa

American Shore & Beach Preservation Association

Advocating for healthy coastlines

Three top points:

- Understand where decision-maker is coming from;
- Have a clear ask;
 - No more than 3 points!
- Practice and prepare.

Where Legislators are coming from

They See Themselves:

- *Bright*
- *Hard working*
- *Detached and Objective*
- *Unresponsive to Pressure*
- *Responsive to People*
- *Future Governors, Senators and Presidents?*

We see them:

- *Average?*
- *Unaware of our Issues?*
- *Hostile to our Issues?*
- *Ambitious?*
- *Unresponsive?*
- *Inconsistent?*
- *In the pocket of ----?*

Reality...? In the middle.

Legislators:

- Bring a point of view and frame of reference
 - Bring relationships
 - Generally decide more on values, beliefs, and relationships than on facts or information
 - More likely to be responsive to people they know and trust
- 3,804 Senate bills in 115th Congress
 - 7400 House bills introduced
 - Staff deal with multiple competing priorities

Where DC Administrators are Coming from

They See Themselves:

- *Bright*
- *Hard working*
- *Working in the interest of the greatest conservation good*
- *Objective*
- *Gatekeepers*
- *Responsible public servants*
- *Stretched too thin*
- *Pelted with requests*

We see them:

- *Average?*
- *Unaware of state/regional differences?*
- *Out of touch with on-the-ground implementation?*
- *Unresponsive?*
- *Inconsistent?*

Reality...? In the middle.

- Administrators:
 - Appointees often bring a legislative lens and Hill relationships
 - Responsive to Legislators
 - Want to accomplish Secretary's priorities, not distract
 - Career employees bring a program maintenance perspective and a network of program contacts
 - Responsive to Appointees and established relationships
 - Generally want to defend their programs
- Decisions made within those frameworks

The Role of Advocates

They Think:

- We provide “input” that balances against others’ input so they can make an “objective decision.”

We think:

- Our role is to persuade them to do the right thing for coasts and society.

They See Coastal/Conservation Groups as:

- Divided
- Unreasonable
- Difficult to deal with
- Always raising the bar
- Impossible to satisfy
- Not seeing the whole picture



What is your ask?

- How can they help you?
- Is this something the person your meeting with can do?
 - Will s/he need to get permission? Work with other agencies?
- What is your timeframe?
 - Sorry... “immediately” isn’t a timeframe!

Be prepared -

- Know what your going to say and who's going to say it;
- How to interact in a Hill meeting:
 - Staffers are often young – don't discount them!
 - Explain how you're a constituent, provide context, but get to the point.
 - If you get a question you don't know the answer to, use it as a reason to follow up.
 - Follow up and build a relationship.
- and Practice!