Making You Best Case when Advocating

COASTAL SUMMIT

Derek Brockbank, Executive Director, ASBPA
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 115\textsuperscript{th} Congress
- 7,400 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!