Building Relationships with Senators and Congresspersons

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Understanding Congress to Build Better Relationships

- Daily Activities
- Motivation
- Decision-Making
- Role of Staff
- BPT Activities
What Senators and Congresspersons Do All Day

WASHINGTON, DC DAYS

- **Congressional Activities** (Floor Debate and Voting, Committees, Member & Party Meetings, Federal Officials)

- **State/District Activities** (Meet with Constituents & Groups, and Federal Officials for Constituents & Groups)

- **Media Activities** (Press Conferences, Interviews, Releases, Statements & Social Media Engagement)

- **Political / Campaign Activities** (Fundraising Events & Calls, Party Events, Supporting Colleagues)
What Senators and Congresspersons Do All Day

BACK HOME DAYS

• **Official Activities**  (Meeting with Constituents, Groups and Local Officials, Local Events and Tours, Town Halls, Media/Press)

• **Campaign**  (Fundraising Events, Political Party Events, Media/Press)

• **Personal Activities**  (Family, Vacations, etc.)
What Motivates Members of Congress

**VOTES – NOT Money (Money is tool for votes)**

- VOTES from constituents to be elected or re-elected to the House, Senate or Higher Office.
- VOTES from Senate/House colleagues to advance or block legislation and funding.
- VOTES from Senate/House Colleagues to move up in Committees and Leadership.
How Members of Congress Make Decisions

- Personal Judgement
- State / District
- National Interest
- Special Interests (which includes veterans & DAV!)
- Political Party
- Political Career

*MUST BALANCE COMPETING INTERESTS*
Understanding the Role of Congressional Staff

- Personal
  - Capitol Hill Office
  - State/District Offices
- Committee
- Leadership
- Professional
- Campaign
Understanding the Role of Congressional Staff

- Representatives have 14 to 18 personal staffers, divided between DC & District Offices
  - Budget: $1.2 million to $1.4 million, with an average of $1.3 million, depending on distance from DC

- Senators have 30 to 100 personal staffers, divided between DC and State Offices
  - Budget: $3.2 million to $5.1 million, depending on size of state, with an average of $3.5 million
Understanding the Role of Congressional Staff

- **House**
  - Members: 435
  - Congressional Committee Staff: 1,324
  - Personal Office Staff: 6,907

- **Senate**
  - Members: 100
  - Congressional Committee Staff: 913
  - Personal Office Staff: 3,884
Understanding the Role of Congressional Staff
What Motivates Congressional Staff

**SUCCESS:**
- Senator of Congressperson
- National
- State / District
- Party
- Personal

*Help Them Be Successful in their Job!*
Good Ways to Build Congressional Relationships

• In State and Congressional District
  ▪ Town Halls, Office Meetings, DAV Events

• In Washington, DC
  • Midwinter, Key Staff Contacts

• Through Media and Social Media
  • Follow and Interact Regularly
Good Ways to Build Congressional Relationships

• Structure BPTs to Match Congressional Organization, Schedules & Motivations

• Identify Key Local Contact for Every Congressional District and/or Constituent Office

• Target Messages Towards Members Interests
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