Effective Advocacy for Bar Leaders

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PROGRAM FORMAT: 2 parts

Part 1: Top 10 Advocacy Tips for Bar Leaders

Part 2: Handouts for Reference Later
- Developing a Lobby Plan
- Executing That Plan
- Having a Plan B
Step 1: Develop a Lobbying Plan

1) Have a Clear Objective
   • Put a human face on it!
   • NOT “more money for legal aid”
   • ASK “$1.2 million more for state legal aid program”

2) Map a Direct Plan
   Map out a clearly articulated plan for accomplishing the objective.

3) Have a Plan B
   Things change rapidly in this environment. Having a Plan B allows you to adapt while maintaining your original goal.
The federal government may be split on an issue and unable to move in any direction, due to ideological differences or general lack of federal urgency. Immigration reform efforts, for instance, have become gridlocked at the federal level, with some members wanting a path to citizenship and more rights for undocumented immigrants, with others wanting additional border security and deportations.

States with a strong interest in immigration felt a great need to act in the absence of federal action. States may move in different directions in addressing the issue:

- In 2017, California, Illinois, Nebraska, and New Jersey adopted resolutions supporting refugees and/or opposing limits on travel from Muslim countries.
- On the contrary, in 2017, Georgia, Indiana, Mississippi, and Texas enacted laws opposing sanctuary city policies.
Issues Are like Illusions

- The same issue could be perceived in many ways when looked at from different circumstances:
  - Different bar leaders
  - Different members of the legislature and staff
  - Different governors/executive officials
  - Different conditions, environment
  - Possibly different public attitudes

- Each lobbying plan should be revisited, reassessed, and updated as needed
Developing Your Plan
What to Keep in Mind

Consider the Many Angles

A good lobbying plan takes as many variables as possible into account, and the path to victory should reflect the moving pieces involved in the process. Consider the people, places, historical context, and the ramifications of your issue to gain a wholistic picture of who and what are involved.

What is the problem? What is a solution?

Who wins, who loses if the bill/amendment passes or fails? Who are the major players?

What is the public policy foundation behind your issue?

What is the fiscal impact?

What is the legislative landscape? Consider timing.

Which types of lobbying (direct, grassroots, social media campaigns, or a combination) will be most effective?
Step 2: Time for Action

Expand Your Team
Confer with your lobbyist, bar executive, executive committee, and close advisors.

Identify Those Affected
Who wins, who loses if the bill/amendment passes or fails? Who are the major players?

Prepare for Opposition
Anticipate and prepare to refute opposing arguments.

Enlist Grassroots Support
Develop or activate a grassroots network.

Communicate Your Message
Deliver your message to legislators, both directly and indirectly.

Promote Your Issue
Utilize media and other forms of communication to reinforce the message.
• **Coalitions** (or even informal, joint lobbying efforts) can enhance influence. “Strange Bedfellows” can make a strong message more compelling.
• Political strengths of allies and potential opponents should be assessed.

- Can the legislation be crafted to enhance more support and avoid powerful opponents?
- In politics, there are no permanent friends, no permanent enemies – only issues.
Donald Trump on lobbyists:

“I have lobbyists that can produce anything for me. They’re great.”

Also Donald Trump on lobbyists:

“Jeb Bush or Hillary . . . all controlled by lobbyists and special interests . . . . Bing bing, bong bong bong, bing bing. You know what that is, right?” (as he simulates putting hands into the pockets of others).
Communicating with Legislators

**In-person meetings**
Nothing can replace a face-to-face-interaction. It is the single most effective method of getting your issue noticed.

**Hearings, roundtables, town halls**
Public events are a great place to rally constituents, but not a great place to introduce an issue.

**Letters, one-pagers, position papers**
Gear your work to your target audience. Think about creative ways to show the impact an issue has on the state/district (e.g., an infographic).

**Telephone calls, email, websites, faxes**
These are inexpensive strategies for volunteers to deliver messages efficiently and effectively.

**Conferences, luncheons, recognition, media, site visits**
Public forums are an excellent opportunity to invite the person to a favorable audience. This goes best paired with other methods, as well, like social media.

**Social Media**
A single post won’t move the needle on an issue, but social media can be paired with other methods for tremendous success.
Before Meeting with Legislators, Do Your Homework

Know the Legislator:
- Which issues are of primary concern to the legislator?
- Does the legislator support or oppose your issue(s)/related issues?
- Any other information relevant to your advocacy issue(s) or which may bridge a personal connection?
- **Tip**: Visit their website and social media pages to see where they stand.

Know the Issue:
- Identify key points and anticipate likely questions or reactions.
  - Be sure to **localize** the issue to legislator’s district/interests.
- Know and be able to respond to your opposition’s arguments.
- Have a consistent message.
- **Tip**: Visit the GAO’s webpage to gain info & see where the ABA stands.

Follow-up is Key:
- Ask if more information is needed and offer the assistance of your bar. Follow through in a timely manner.
- **Tip**: If it is a federal issue, make sure and let the GAO know, so we can mention your efforts in future interactions with the congressional office.
Other Modes of Communication

Don’t Forget About Your Constituents

Use All Forms of Influence
Advancing an issue in the legislature often involves some combination of direct lobbying, grassroots, and media-related efforts, as well as coordinated efforts by allies.

01

Where You Can’t, Constituents Can
Keep in mind restrictions on direct lobbying under the state code as well as reporting requirements. Grassroots advocacy may circumvent most of the concerns and reporting.

02
“All Politics is Local”: Grassroots and Grasstops

Constituent Support
Constituent support counts; stronger/broader constituent support counts even more.

Build Ongoing Relationships
Relationships matter, so don’t let the only time you reach out be to ask for something.

Make Connections
Lawyers are influential and connected, but so are clients, friends, family, and business associates.

Keep Track of Your Interactions
Be systematic in developing and maintaining a grassroots database; communicate with your base regularly.

Constituent Support

Build Ongoing Relationships

Make Connections

Keep Track of Your Interactions
Using Social Media for Advocacy

Challenge: harsh rhetoric, cacophony, and uncontrollability.

Develop a modest earned-media plan (“modest” corresponds with “achievable”).

Expertise counts—both subject-matter and media-savvy.

Be very clear: What is your message, who is your audience?
Social Media Campaigns

Take advantage of social media to enhance your presence. Interacting with a legislator’s office through social media will reinforce your message. Asking constituents to do the same will increase attention to your advocacy campaign.

01 Channel Strategy
Decide which social media platforms work best for your advocacy (Facebook, Twitter, etc.).

02 Know Your Audience
Know what your legislators and their staff read & use!

03 Brand Your Campaign
Provide constituents with directions on how to participate (what platform to use, provide sample copy with a clear ask, and provide hashtags).
If a picture is worth a thousand words, an infographic is priceless.

Infographics

Digital Assets True Value

Infographics are a fantastic way to distill complex information into an easily digestible format. Once more, these types of digital assets are readymade to be shared on social media and organizational webpages.
What About “Plan B”? 

“You can’t always get what you want,” but sometimes you can get what you need!

Hope for the Best, Plan for the Worst
A lot of times, you won’t know what you are up against until the process is underway. Prepare to adapt as the situations arise.

Success Can Come in Different Forms
Diverting or emasculating legislation may be easier than blocking it completely.

Don’t Be Afraid to Strike a Deal
Politics means compromise.
Maintain **Year-Round** Relationships

- Don’t let asking for something be the only time you reach out.
- Develop and maintain working relationships with legislators year-round:
  - Offer to serve as an information resource.
  - Invite legislators and staff to bar/pro bono/legal aid events/community activities.
- Keep your grassroots network up-to-date to keep them engaged.
Remember: You Are Not In This Alone

- Other bar leadership and members with lobbying or legislative experience
- Outside contract lobbyists
- National Conference of Bar Executives Government Relations Group
- Key Contacts: Bar members with relationships with legislators
- ABA Governmental Affairs Office

Download free ebook: ambar.org/allpolitics
ABA Grassroots Action Center

ambar.org/govaffairs

Check out the new resources in our Grassroots Action Center.

Digital Toolkit
Check out the new resources in our Grassroots Action Center.

Direct Communication Tools
Send digital communications directly to federal elected officials through our platform.

Asset Library
Find content and resources designed specifically for your use.

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Find content and resources designed specifically for your use.

Content Development
See if we have common goals or issues. If we do, call us! We may have content that can be edited to fit your audience.

Tutorials and Best Practices
Find tutorials on current advocacy efforts, congressional information, best practices for amplifying your message, and more.

Research and Analysis
Find issue specific analysis and congressional profiles to prepare for your campaigns.

Join the ABA Grassroots Action Team!

Download free ebook: ambar.org/allpolitics
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Questions?

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