

NORTH CAROLINA
BAR ASSOCIATION
SEEKING LIBERTY & JUSTICE

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**Director of Governmental
Affairs**

**COMMUNICATING
EFFECTIVELY WITH THE
LEGISLATIVE BRANCH OF
GOVERNMENT**

PLAN IN ADVANCE

**What you can do before your
meeting that can make a
difference...**

KNOW WHO THE PLAYERS ARE

- **Which party is in control of each house?**
- **Leadership is the key**
- **What committees matter?**
- **Players outside the General Assembly**
- **Fiscal and Research Staff**

KNOW THE ISSUES FACING THE LEGISLATURE

- **Session always revolves around the budget**
 - **Understand the process**
 - **Know the status of budget proposals and negotiations**
 - **Budget discussions are ALWAYS taking place**

KNOW THE ISSUES FACING THE LEGISLATURE

- **Let your audience know that you are engaged in what is going on “downtown” – what are the hot topics**
- **Exception: controversy and scandals – stay away from even if asked**
 - **“I don’t know enough about the circumstances to comment”**

UNDERSTAND YOUR TOPIC AND COME PREPARED

- Why is your issue important or more important?
- Prepare talking points
 - Provide the ammunition the legislator will need to convince his/her colleagues
 - Need the knowledge to make the decision when the time comes

UNDERSTAND YOUR TOPIC AND COME PREPARED

- What do you want to accomplish?
 - A “yes” vote
 - Coalition builder
 - Education is the key
- Be accurate with your information
- I do not know is an OK response – offer to find out and follow up

UNDERSTAND YOUR TOPIC AND COME PREPARED

- Anticipate responses and questions
- Know who you are competing against
- You may not be well received
- What is everyone else saying?

BRING MATERIALS THAT YOU CAN LEAVE

- Talking points
- Short and to the point
- No more than two pages
- Most legislators do not have staff

UNDERSTAND THE PROCESS

- How the budget is formed
- The players, again
- The committee process, again
 - Negotiations (“Room 612”)
 - Conference Report
- Reasons for disagreement
- “Rules”
- Caucus

PERSONAL CONTACT WITH LEGISLATORS

WHERE TO MEET

- Home office
 - Constituency
- Raleigh
 - Where you can find them all
- Avoid “meal meetings”
 - Who pays?

KNOW YOUR LEGISLATOR

- Know something personal
 - Anything personal in common?
 - College, Kids, Friends
- Both elected officials
 - You both understand what it means to run for office
 - Same constituents
- Be polite and then get to the issue: “I am here to discuss...”

KNOW YOUR LEGISLATOR

- What party?
- Role and standing in the caucus/party
- Committees and position
- Friend or foe?
- Other Key Relationships –
 - Campaign supporters
 - Outside Raleigh

OTHER THINGS TO REMEMBER

- Use personal experiences and stories
- Don't assume the legislator knows anything
- Thank the legislator for meeting with you
- “I understand that you have a difficult job and that you have to make difficult decisions.”

OTHER THINGS TO REMEMBER

- Coalition Building
 - Before, during and after
- Education is the key
- Don't threaten or insult (ethics)
- Take time to sum up your meeting
- What can I do for you
- Write a thank you letter

Contact Information and Useful Links

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- www.ncbar.org/governmentalaffairs

■ General Assembly

- www.ncleg.net