

Preface

“Everything in the world that deals with human relations, in one way or another passes through the halls of Congress. Everything eventually ends up somewhere in the legislative thinking of Congress.”

Mike Michaelson, former C-SPAN executive vice president
and former staffer for five House speakers

Source: Exploring the Capitol: A Self-Guided Tour through the Halls of Congress (C-SPAN)

Former President Dwight D. Eisenhower once suggested that “Politics ought to be the part-time profession of every citizen who would protect the rights and privileges of free people and who would preserve what is good and fruitful in our national heritage.” He understood that laws touch the lives of ordinary people.

Members of Congress continually cast consequential votes and make decisions that can directly influence issues as personal to us as the air we breathe, the products we buy, the services we use, the policies where we work, the health care that we receive, the benefits we will receive upon retirement, and the defense of our country. Whether aware of it or not, Americans do not go through a day without being affected in some way by a federal, state, or local law.

Indeed, legislative decisions are increasingly complex. First, the sheer volume of legislative activity is enormous. For example, in 2005 alone, 8,321 measures were introduced in Congress, 728 recorded votes were cast in the full House of Representatives and Senate, and 169 public bills were enacted into law. Approximately 7,553 witnesses testified before Congress in 1,546 congressional hearings. In the April 25, 2007, article, “What You Know Washington,” a guest columnist for *The Hill* newspaper documented the increase in legislative and executive branch activity:

“The 109th Congress introduced 64 percent more pieces of legislation than the 104th Congress (13,074 pieces of legislation, up from 7,991) while the Federal Register last year published more than 75,000 pages of rules and regulations.”

According to the July 2002 edition of *The American Prospect* magazine, approximately 150,000 bills are considered annually by the fifty state legislators and about 25 percent of them become law. Lobbyists at all levels are frequently evaluating and refining their strategies and tools for tracking and shaping state and local legislation and regulations. According to Paul W. Hallman, president of MultiState Associates, Inc.: “Given the nearly 200,000 bills introduced per biennium in the states, this amounts to the enactment of some 40,000 to 50,000 new laws every two years.”

Federal, state, and local lobbying activities are an important part of the deliberative process. These activities represent thousands of hours of research and preparation by government affairs professionals. Lobbyists—whether paid professionals who advocate

for a particular issue or concerned citizens who express their voices through the power of the ballot box as individual lobbyists—must be well-equipped for today’s complex and challenging environment. Lobbyists are challenged to excel strategically, technically, ethically, and interactively.

Strategically: Effective lobbyists are continually building their expertise, refining their strategies, and adapting their plans. In an increasingly competitive and complicated field, lobbyists need to develop, refine, and adjust effective approaches if they want to succeed with their issues and the groups they represent. This book presents the top strategies for winning as an effective lobbyist. Winning strategies, resources, and tips relevant to congressional, executive branch, and state and local lobbying are included.

Technically: Legislators are constantly addressing a variety of complex issues. Many legislative decisions are extremely complicated. In her July 13, 2006, *Wall Street Journal* column on “The Complexity Crisis,” Peggy Noonan dubbed this legislative era “the increasing complexity of everything.” Frequently, today’s legislators are not painting on a clean palette. Bills often amend existing laws, and policymakers are making decisions in a complicated legal environment. Often, practical ramifications or long-term implications of proposals are not readily apparent. In this complex environment, well-intentioned legislators may pass a law with unintended consequences.

Ethically: Today’s lobbyists must respect not only the laws, but the professional standards governing advocacy in order to earn a positive reputation, to maintain credible contacts, and to avoid public and political embarrassment, the kiss of death for a lobbyist. The attributes for achieving lobbying success include integrity, reputation, and adherence to professional values.

It has been said that “In Washington, you are allowed to make one mistake . . . Maybe.” Politics can be a ruthless business, and lobbying, especially in our nation’s capitol, can be brutal. This harsh reality led former President Harry S. Truman to say, “If you want a friend in Washington, get a dog.” John F. Kennedy described Washington as “a city of Southern efficiency and Northern charm.” Actions can be scrutinized by both the opposition and the press. Mistakes made by a lobbying group on an issue that would go unnoticed in most organizations can appear on the front page of *The Washington Post*.

In lobbying, like life, the one thing that is constant is change. As governments at all levels continue to respond to specific situations and aim to win positive public approval, legal and ethical lobbying requirements have become increasingly complex and have presented new liabilities. Lobbying scandals, changes in the political environment, and compliance problems with new requirements will continue to prompt revisions to lobbying rules. While this book should not take the place of

appropriate legal counsel, it does provide practical resources and methods for maintaining compliance and staying abreast of ethical and legal requirements.

Interactively: It's not just what you say, but how you say it. It's not just your information or your position, but how you present it. Lobbyists must think proactively and creatively about all of their communications. This book includes practical tips, research-based methods, and step-by-step guides for communicating with policy-makers in every venue most effectively, including telephone calls, emails, congressional meetings, testifying before Congress, building coalitions, and working with the press.

Despite the scandals and cynicism that regularly appear in the daily news cycle, lobbying remains an essential part of the American political process. *Political involvement is not merely a right of an informed citizenry, it is a responsibility.* Our government does not function properly without an engaged and involved electorate. The role of professional lobbyists is to assist with citizen engagement and involvement.

During his tribute to those who died at the battle of Gettysburg, President Abraham Lincoln admonished Americans to be dedicated to the cause of freedom, the unfinished work of those who had given their lives for it:

"It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. . . . for us to be dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

It is my hope this book will be a useful tool for citizen leaders and organizational spokespersons, and that it will help them to effectively exercise their rights and responsibilities as they honor the trust placed in them by the interests they represent.