Easing into the Political Arena

"A citizen is one who participates in power." Aristotle

Elected officials must know the opinions of their constituents to make informed decisions. Yet, establishing contact with these individuals may seem intimidating. The following are suggestions for easing into the political arena.

Break the Ice!

- Identify legislators at the local, state and federal levels who are dealing with the issues affecting your industry or special interest.
- Call or write officials just to say "hello" and to identify you as a constituent interested in the political process. In this initial contact, you may wish to explain your position and express interest in government activities that affect your special interest.
- Introduce yourself via a courtesy visit to an elected official's office.
- Invite local officials to community activities, such as crime-watch or professional association meetings.

Recognize Opportunities

- Attend town hall meetings, "eggs and issues" breakfasts, or special forums. Most elected officials schedule such opportunities on a regular basis to discuss issues. (Meeting notices will be listed on their websites, local party websites, mailed directly to constituents or may be published in local newspapers.)
- Volunteer time: Seek service on the elected official's advisory committee (a key opportunity for input into the decision-making process). Join the activities of a local political party.

Information is Power

- Stay informed! https://Congress.gov is a website that publishes all congressional legislative activity. Some local newspapers provide regular columns on state legislature activities, and you can find state legislator bill activities on your state legislator website. Once you find a bill you're interested in, you can follow history, amendments, and status reports.
- Use the bill-tracking platform if your organization provides this option.
- Subscribe to publications or visit state legislature websites reporting on current law-making activities. State legislature websites have publications online including agency reports and legislative journals.

You Are a Resource

- Offer expertise. Inform elected officials when (and how) you may be of assistance.
- Communicate and/or meet with state and local officials to help them better understand how certain issues affect your industry or special interest.
- Provide educational resources for the political representatives in your area.

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