

Arts Advocacy Best Practices with Senator Stan Rosenberg

Pre & Post Election Activities for 501(c)3
Organizations



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Post Election “To Do” List

1. Send congratulatory letter
2. Request in person meeting
3. Invite to be a member of the Arts Caucus
4. Identify Grasstops
5. Invite them to an existing holiday arts event
6. Send follow up thank you note
7. Host evening reception at Capitol
8. Set up reception for new members only
9. Set up meeting with staff
10. Ask key new members to request specific committee assignments



Pre Election

Work to identify contact information of candidates

- Need to have this information ready to go for after the election.
 - E-mail
 - Website
 - Phone number
 - Physical Address
- VoterVoice has all major candidates' contact information in their "Elections" module.

Identify Grasstops for all the candidates.

- Find arts supporters who know the candidates personally.
- Line up their support for after the election to contact the new legislator
- Use them to obtain an in person meeting with the new legislator



Pre Election (cont.)

Collect data about candidate's position

- Previous Arts votes if running for re-election or if they have held other elected office
- Track various actions – signed support letter for the arts, etc.

End result will be an ever-growing database of legislators contact information, arts positions, committee assignments, possible leadership roles and ongoing updates of engagements with the elected official or their staff.

- Can be a simple Excel spreadsheet

November 7-14

Election Night – November 8th

- Send the winner a congratulatory email, post to Facebook, Twitter, etc.
- If you can go to their victory party, or have a representative go, even better.
- If appropriate, send a note of consolation to the loser.

November 9th – Have Grasstops supporters contact the winner on your behalf and congratulate them.

- Make sure Grasstop supporters has been trained and have your talking points.
- This is primarily a social call, not a hard sell about the arts.

November 7-14 (cont.)

Nov 7-14 Send congratulatory letter to the winner

- USPS – not an email
- Should be tailored to the individual
- Discuss your organization
- Overview of arts in their district
- Remind them of any campaign promises
- Enclose information about your organization and upcoming events
- Communicate and open invitation for them to visit or call upon you
- Let them know you will be calling to set up an in person meeting



November 15-30

Request an in person meeting

- Use Grasstop to obtain and attend the meeting
- Also have representative(s) from local arts organization(s)
- Meeting does not have to be at their office - they might not have one - but can be at an arts organization, a coffee shop, etc.
- Meeting should not be a hard sell, but continue to introduce you to them
 - Discuss what the arts do in the district
 - Show economic information about the arts
 - Offer to become their auxiliary staffer on the arts
- Follow up with a thank you note – hand written, USPS



December

All Social – No Business

Identify a local arts organization that is having a holiday event and invite the elected official and their family as honored guests *(per state's ethic guidelines)*.

- Again, no business, just fun
- If possible, allow them to briefly speak to the group
- Recognize the elected official and their family from the podium
- Try and have Grasstop supporter present to introduce elected official to VIPs
- Send follow-up thank you note. In the note, wish them good luck with the upcoming session and that you will see them at the state capitol!



January or December

Depending on when your session begins, the following should be done in early January or even December, but prior to when the Senate or House organizes

Arts Caucus

- If an Arts Caucus exists, encourage every member to join and give them information on how to join.
- Also provide a description of what the caucus does/member responsibilities
- If appropriate, remind them that their predecessor was a member of the arts caucus
- Send written information, but have a Grasstop contact them to close the deal



January or December (cont.)

Depending on when your session begins, the following should be done in early January or even December, but prior to when the Senate or House organizes

Committee Assignments

- Find out how committee assignments are handed out
 - Often Leader decides but asks legislator for top three picks
- Selectively ask new legislators who are very supportive to ask to be on the committee with jurisdiction over the arts
- Keep in mind that new legislators will have very little power or influence, but depending on term limits, will be powerful in the future. In other words, groom them to be your star legislator.



First Week of Session

Send them a welcome to their capitol email

- If your office is near the state capitol complex, extend an open invitation to drop by and or use your office as a quiet get a way
- Remind them to be on the lookout for their invitation to any upcoming event (State Arts Advocacy Day, new legislator reception, etc.)



First Quarter of Session

Organize a new member reception/orientation

- Can be a stand-alone event or during your Arts Advocacy Day, etc.
- Do this early in the session, new legislators are still in campaign mode and are likely to go to everything they are invited to
- Give careful thought to the agenda and who you will invite
- Invite a few senior legislators who are your supporters
- Does not have to be in the capitol complex, just close and easy to get to.
- Invite Grasstops to be there



First Half of Session

Organize your State Arts Advocacy Day or some other large meeting

- Make sure to involve new members
- Normal rules for arts advocacy day apply
 - Do it before appropriations bills hit committees
 - Involve advocates from all parts of the state
 - Involve students as much as possible
 - Get legislators to speak
 - If appropriate, have legislators introduce legislation declaring the day “arts advocacy day,” etc.
 - Food and drink is always a good thing



First Year

At some point during the first year, (not necessarily during session), invite the legislator to an event that will connect him or her with a large group of arts advocates.

- This could be your annual conference
- Your major fundraiser (comp them if ethically permitted)
- A high level dinner hosted by one of your patrons

The idea is to make sure they know the key arts players in your state, not necessarily just their district.

This will hopefully get them more involved in the arts back in the district and when they vote on legislation



Staff

For those states where legislators have staff:

- Identify arts staffers and get to know them
- Staff are young, appeal to them in a way they can relate
 - Throw a concert just for them or making sure to invite them as your special guest
 - If you have famous artists visiting your state capitol, have a special time where staff can meet them
- Know that staff will only stick around for one to two years

Discussion & Questions

