



KILLING BILLS: FIVE WAYS TO TORPEDO PENDING LEGISLATION

Associations, labor unions, corporate lobbyists, and non-profits each rise and fall on the basis of their ability to influence policy outcomes. The power to kill harmful legislation, through persuasion and influence, is a requisite skill for any team of government relations professionals.

Labyrinthine bills arise from the depths of committee, which if submitted for a floor vote, could yield devastating consequences. Therefore, it is the goal of a savvy public affairs squad to “kill (the) bill” while its still in committee.

An example of this strategy is the work performed by One Click Politics in conjunction with the Michigan Redemption Association to kill HB 5886, long before it ever came to a vote before the Michigan House Judiciary Committee.

If passed, this harmful legislation would have prohibited

business owners and churches in Michigan from hosting Bingo tournaments and operating redemption games (think Dave and Busters). Large casinos, clustered around Detroit, would have been the beneficiaries. However, by following the steps below, Michigan Redemption Games succeeded in killing HB 5886.

MEET WITH LEGISLATORS

Your direct lobbyist will provide the necessary legislative intelligence, policy insights, research statistics, and salesmanship required to influence elected officials, who are undecided.

Of perhaps greater value, however; than sending in your hired-guns (insert top lobbying firm), you can organize a group of loyal citizen activists, assemble them by state delegation or legislative district, and send them off – armed with your best advocacy materials – to meet with their elected officials. After all, personal meetings with constituents are the most effective form of citizen advocacy according to Congressional staffers. ¹

Congressional Management Foundation ¹

CONNECT WITH CONGRESSIONAL STAFF

It's no secret that legislative staffers are the eyes and ears of Congress. They are the gatekeepers of democracy, in so far as they control access to the information directed by interest groups toward Representatives.

The next best thing to a personal meeting with a Senator is to meet with his or her Legislative Director or the Legislative Assistant in charge of the issue you are advocating for (or against). Personal meetings with staffers, if coupled with maps, charts, and reliable statistics; are sure to advance your advocacy aims.

IDENTIFY & ENGAGE KEY CONTACTS

Not all advocates are created equal, which is why it is paramount to distinguish your grassroots from grasstops. Well connected grasstops advocates, commonly referred to as key contacts, provide you with enhanced access to legislators and their staff.

A key contact usually has a personal, professional, or political relationship with an elected official. These influential advocates may have been college classmates, served in the same combat unit, or worked as the campaign manager for a sitting Senator ten years ago.

RECRUIT & MOBILIZE ONLINE SUPPORTERS

What is your threshold for success? Is it 500 emails, 200 patch-through calls, or 50 social media posts to legislator's profiles? What is the size of your advocate universe? If you're starting out with 10,000 people and

you need 500 actions; your goal is reasonable, if not modest.

However, if you're aiming for 500 actions, and only starting with 1,000 advocates; you will almost certainly need to acquire additional supporters in order to obtain the targeted number actions, since the average advocacy campaign only yields a 10% response rate.

With this in mind, strategies focused on re-engaging dormant advocates and obtaining new ones through creative advertising and direct outreach, are key to driving the actions needed to create measurable influence on pending legislation.

CONDUCT A CAMPAIGN EFFECTIVENESS REPORT

Did you reach the total number of actions you wanted? Did the targeted legislation pass or fail? How do you measure success? Is it in terms of total number of actions, bill passage rate, or as a percentage of advocate engagement versus the size of your advocate universe?

Grassroots professionals answer these questions differently, however you should be using an online advocacy solution that tracks, measures, and assesses the ongoing performance of your advocacy campaigns both against your own targets, and those of your peer groups, in order to give you a fair assessment of the effectiveness (or ineffectiveness) of your efforts in terms of influencing legislators to "kill bill(s)."

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(202) 800-8877 • www.oneclickpolitics.com