

**“TEN TRUTHS”
ABOUT WORKING WITH STATE LEGISLATORS**

1. **SPONSORS MATTER** – Don’t always go to the “easiest’ legislator. Pay attention to committee membership, relationships with the Speaker and other leadership, etc.
2. **SEEK A PARTIAL VICTORY WHERE YOU CAN** – It can take two or three years to pass a bill, and even then you may be faced with a choice of getting only part of what you want or nothing. Take the partial victory, and come back again next year.
3. **BE FISCALLY PRUDENT** – What may be a good program may not be affordable.
4. **IT’S NEVER DONE UNTIL IT’S DONE** – Just because a bill gets out of committee doesn’t mean you’ve won. Amendment can kill a bill. Also, committee members who voted for the bill in committee might reverse their votes when the bill reaches the floor.
5. **WORK THE PRESS** – Use them as a friend, but understand that “off the record’ isn’t really off the record. Don’t say anything you wouldn’t want to see on the front page of the newspaper. Also, public interest groups are *not* delegates’ public relations agents; do not presume to speak for a legislator.
6. **POLITICS MATTER** – Get involved in campaigns. Elected officials remember those who helped them when it counted.
7. **DON’T TICK OFF THE LEADERSHIP** – It takes a lot of power to successfully challenge the Speaker of the Assembly or the President of the Senate. Unless you are part of a large coalition, challenging the leadership can kill any hope you have of ever getting a bill passed.
8. **DON’T ASSUME THEY KNOW YOU** – Never assume that a legislator has any clue who you are or knows anything about your bill. Always put your name on anything you give a legislator, explain what the bill does, and why your position is important (and correct). When speaking with a legislator about a bill for the first time, start with the basics without treating the legislator like she’s ignorant. If she’s nodding in obvious understanding, then you can begin to speed up and skip the more basic details of the legislation, but not until you’re certain the legislator is familiar with your issue.
9. **TODAY’S ENEMY CAN BE TOMORROW’S ALLY** – Just because a legislator opposes you this time doesn’t mean he’ll oppose you next time.
10. **BE HONEST, THOROUGH, AND RELIABLE**
 - * Honesty: “It’s a good bill, but it’s expensive, “or It’s a good bill, but Montgomery County is not getting as much as they want.” Legislators will appreciate your honesty and put more faith in your words. Or, if you’re going to testify against a legislator’s bill, let her know.
 - * Thorough: Give the legislator complete, objective information so he or she doesn’t feel a need to get additional information from your opposition. This way, you can give her all the information but it’s with your spin put on it.
 - * Reliable: If you promise more information, get it. Make sure you follow-up.

* Taken from the 12th Annual State Relations Conference, Phoenix, Arizona, December 2005.