The Nuts and Bolts of Legislative Advocacy
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The Conversation
(Romare Bearden, 1977)

Goals Today
• Effective conversation when communicating with Legislators.
• Become a resource to your legislator.
• Become a resource to a committee office.
The Legislative Visit

Who works for a Legislator?

• Staff who have earned or are working on degrees in public policy, finance, law, social work, etc.
• All are qualified to meet with you and to summarize your issue to their Legislator.

How many issues are presented to a legislative office in a day?
What is the job of the staff person receiving visitors?

- Entering calls and visits into a software program.
- Recording your ideas to brief their Legislator.

They evaluate your input, determine problems needing solutions, funding required.

- They prioritize: All issues. Affordable issues. Passable issues.

They form an impression:
Would this visitor be helpful in further discussions?

By your:
- Experiences
- Expertise
- Contacts
- Problem solving.
- Ability to think globally.
Preparation for the Legislative Visit

Consider bringing:

• One page about your issue, using approximately three bullet points.
• Name, address, phone, email, on the document or a business card.
• A photo or story that makes it personal.

A sticker or trinket symbolizing your issue.
Example: a lemon and a recipe card:

Lemons into Lemonade
Juice of one budget
Water from Rainy Day Fund
Sugar from new revenues
Stir until everyone understands that 'no cuts' provides what Texans with disability require to remain in their communities.
Sponsored by Invest in Community!
http://txp2p.org/InvestCommunity/index.html
If you don’t already have an appointment:

• “Good morning. Do you have a public policy specialist available who handles ____________________?”
  Health and Human Services issues
  Education issues
  Accessible housing/transportation

How to present yourself:

• Be friendly.
• Be honest to preserve credibility.
• Avoid yelling, bullying, threats, including to not vote for them.
• Emotions are fine, the one-Kleenex version.

• Be flexible.
• Avoid absolutes.
  Say ‘most’, ‘few’, and ‘in my case’.

XXX ____________________ XXX
In statistics, the outliers are ignored.
In your visit, stay in the middle!
Understanding the Continuum

• We need to recognize that ADA and IDEA are relatively new. A lack of safeguards in earlier decades has created a long continuum of experiences and placements today.

Avoid adding a second or third issue!

To close the meeting:

• Thank them, of course.
• Ask for their card and later write the issue and date on it.
• Follow up with an email.
You may get to meet with your actual legislator:

Emails and letters:
• If you cannot go meet them.
• Keep it simple, a paragraph for each point.
• Make frequent contact.
• Vote in elections (they check).

The Bill Hearing
The Committee Who Hears Your Bill

- Established in mid-January. Listed in:
  - Texas Directory
    http://www.txdirectory.com/online
  - Texas Legislature Online (TLO)
    http://www.capitol.state.tx.us
- Who are the chairman and vice chairman – background, political party, day job?
- Are bill sponsors/cosponsors on this committee? Hopefully they are.

Bill Hearing Schedules

- Using TLO, note when your committee meets, for example, every Tuesday. Watch for your bill on their schedule.
- Sign up on TLO to track changes to the bill.
- To receive bill alerts, join Texas Parent Advocates, by sending an email to txpacs-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Preparing your Testimony

- Open with your name, your city or county. Thank them for letting you speak.
- State your problem, discuss a few details, state the solution, making sure to specifically say that you are FOR or AGAINST bill # _____.
- Thank them again, and ask if there are any questions.
- (A 3-minute testimony is usually one page of typing).
Further prep...

- Optional: Find an expert to say if it covers the bill at hand.
- Bring 15 copies of your testimony - or you are welcome to speak extemporaneously and, later, the committee will transcribe your words from a recording.

Entering a Hearing

- Park in a pink sandstone garage at 12th and San Jacinto, or park at a meter.
- Find the hearing room, sign a witness card and take it to the clerk up front.
- The chairman schedules agencies to testify before accepting general testimony.
- If you cannot stay, submit it as written only. It will be just as official.

Oral Testimony

- Once called, go to the microphone and face the committee to begin.
- If you don’t know an answer, offer to email one later. If their questions are too personal, decline to answer them.
- Sometimes I abandon my script to instead rebut what someone else said.
Nervous about testifying?

• Texas Parent to Parent and TXPACS will support you throughout the process:
  Txp2p-advocacylistserv-subscribe@yahoogroups.com
  Txpacs-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

• YouTube clips of Texas teens giving testimony can be found online at:
  http://txylf.tamu.edu/testimonials.htm

Further Leadership

Ongoing phone calls are important to:
• Advise a committee member how to vote.
• Advise a Senator or Rep how to vote.
• Advise the Governor what bills to sign.
  (Before publishing an alert, follow your own instructions to discover typos in addresses or phone numbers.)
  Join forces with others at a press conference:

Next rally: Monday, March 11, 2013