

ASA Guide to Grassroots Advocacy



American Staffing Association
277 S. Washington Street, Suite 200
Alexandria, Virginia 22314
703-253-2020

To view this guide online, visit americanstaffing.net.



Grassroots advocacy is the art of influencing policy making. For people who own or manage businesses, it is essential to business success.

Everyone who is successful in their business can be effective at grassroots advocacy. The ingredients are the same: identify the market; develop an excellent product or service; know your customer; and sell, sell, sell. The biggest difference is that the “customers” are legislators or other government officials. They are just as important as your regular customers because they can make or break your business.

This guide provides a practical outline of how to effectively interact with policy makers so they understand what staffing firms do and why it should matter to them and the people they represent.

It is critically important to engage in grassroots efforts before harmful legislation is introduced. It takes time to establish and nurture relationships. Staffing agencies should therefore meet with policy makers to educate them about their staffing businesses well in advance of the introduction of harmful legislation.

Remember, ASA is an invaluable resource for your advocacy efforts. When you have an opportunity to interact with policy makers, one of your first calls should be to the ASA legal and government affairs team; we are here to help (see the end of this document for a list of ASA staff and how to contact them).

ADVOCACY 101

- “All politics is local...”
—Former House Speaker Tip O’Neill
- “If you’re a lobbyist who never gave us money, I didn’t talk to you. If you’re a lobbyist who gave us money, I might talk to you. But if you came from back home and sat in my lobby, I talked to you without exception—regardless of the financial contributions.”
—Former South Carolina congressman and White House chief of staff Mick Mulvaney

WHY ENGAGE IN GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY?

It sounds simple, but everyone can make a difference when it comes to the formation of laws. Anyone who is good at their business can be good at advocacy because they have a story to tell.

When people engage in advocacy, they help influence the legislative or regulatory process and often find solutions to real problems. Every law that has ever been passed has benefitted from thoughts and opinions from various people.

WHY DO POLICY MAKERS LISTEN TO PEOPLE WHO ENGAGE IN GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY?

Policy makers are tasked with writing laws, and while they may be well versed or experts in some areas, in most areas they are not. They do not know everybody’s business.

So when you go in to speak with a policy maker about a proposed law that will affect your employees, in many cases you will be asking questions that have not been answered or explaining something the policy maker and staff have not thought of. You also can make problems real to policy makers and make them think of various things that had not occurred to them.

WHY SHOULD I ENGAGE IN GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY?

When you engage on legislation that affects your business, it will also affect the lives of everyone who works with and for you. Making sure that policy makers understand the impact potential laws will have on their lives is one of the most important things you can do.

Your views are important. Your firm employs hundreds or thousands of temporary and contract workers in the districts represented by your state and federal policy makers. You have a unique perspective on labor and employment issues and trends and how they will affect the economy, your state, your business, the people you employ, and their families. Your day-to-day operational expertise can explain things in a way that resonates with policy makers.

WHEN SHOULD I MEET WITH POLICY MAKERS?

Before harmful legislation is introduced. Proactively meet with them so they get to know you and your business—and the value you provide to their constituents. Establish relationships now.



WHERE SHOULD I START?

Here are the key group of legislators to focus on:

Federal

Congress

- [House Education and Workforce Committee](#)
- [House Ways and Means Committee](#)
- [Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee](#)
- [Senate Finance Committee](#)

Administration

- [Department of Labor](#)
- [Department of Treasury](#)
- [Occupational Safety and Health Administration](#)
- [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#)

States¹

Legislatures

- Key Committees: Tax/Finance and Labor

State Agencies

- Department of Labor
- Department of Finance
- Department of Business/Commerce

WHAT SHOULD I TELL THEM?

Policy makers probably don't understand your business model. So be sure to tell them

- Where you are located
- The number of offices you have
- The number of years you have been in business
- The number of people you employ
- The types of jobs you fill
- Any workforce training you provide
- The lengths of your assignments
- That you employ your temporary workers and that they are covered by every employment law that covers all other employees
 - Unemployment
 - Workers' compensation
 - Overtime
 - Nondiscrimination
 - Leave laws
 - Etc.

HOW WILL I KNOW WHAT ISSUES TO ENGAGE ON?

Use ASA as a resource. ASA monitors and evaluates federal, state, and selected municipal bill introductions, proposed regulations, and court decisions that could affect the industry.

WHAT ARE SOME OF OUR INDUSTRY'S KEY ISSUES?

First and foremost, proposals aimed specifically at the

business of staffing—such as temporary worker right-to-know laws, licensing requirements, sales tax on staffing services, etc.

Proposals aimed at the general business community that would have a disparate or unique impact on the staffing industry. Such examples include predictive scheduling and artificial intelligence proposals.

WHEN THERE IS A KEY ISSUE THAT I WANT TO BECOME INVOLVED WITH, HOW DO I KNOW WHICH POLICY MAKERS I SHOULD BE REACHING OUT TO?

Personal Relationships: If you have a personal relationship with an elected official, you should always reach out to them first. For example, let's say there is a health care staffing bill introduced in the Virginia State Senate. If you have a relationship with a lawmaker, reach out to them first. Even if they are not in the same chamber, or of the same political party, they have relationships and will be able to direct you to the right people to speak with.

Bill Sponsor: If you do not have a relationship to lean on, look up who the bill sponsor is and reach out to their office first.

Bill Co-Sponsor: Once a bill is introduced, other legislators will sign on as "co-sponsors." You should reach out to them next.

Committee Chair and Ranking Member: Shortly after a bill is introduced, it is assigned to at least one committee. You should reach out to schedule time to chat to the committee chair and committee ranking member (i.e., the most senior member in the minority).

Committee Members: Reaching out next to committee members will be helpful as it is likely they will, at some point, be voting on the bill you are interested in.

WHERE CAN I MEET WITH MY LOCAL REPRESENTATIVES?

District Offices: The best time to meet with legislators—whether state or federal—is when they are home in their district offices.

Capitol Offices: While it is often easier to meet with them in their offices in the state capitol, that is a busy place and they will likely be pulled in many different directions the entire time they are there.

Your Offices: It is a great idea to invite key legislators and their staff to your staffing firm's offices to give them a better idea of how you operate and the jobs you provide to workers.



Fundraisers: Legislators are constantly raising money—mostly by hosting fundraisers. Some can be very low-dollar events, like summertime picnics, while others could be a \$1,000 or more. The more expensive the fundraiser, the more facetime you will have with the legislator. Always make sure to check with ASA before attending a fundraiser. If our political action committee StaffingPAC can donate to the event, we are happy to do so and have you attend.

I HAVE A MEETING—NOW WHAT DO I SAY?

The first thing you should do is contact the ASA legal and government affairs department. We will set up a time to talk and walk you through the issue, help develop your talking points, arm you with invaluable statistics, and help in any other way we can.

If you will be testifying at a committee hearing in person, or submitting written testimony, ASA will help you draft your statement, weaving in key policy arguments with personal testimony from you about how the proposed bill will affect your business and employees.

DO YOU HAVE ANY OTHER LOBBYING TIPS?

As a matter of fact, we do! Here are some key tips to remember as you prepare for your meeting:

- **Treat Legislators and Their Staff With Respect:** Be courteous and explain your concerns with the proposed bill.
- **Rehearse Your Presentation:** Your meeting may last only a few minutes. Make sure you know the key points you want to get across and have an order to your presentation. Be concise and stay on topic.
- **Leave Behinds:** Just because you did not receive a lot of time doesn't mean they are not interested in your thoughts and concerns. Make sure you have a well-written, concise one-page paper discussing your concerns and suggested fixes/compromises that you can leave when your meeting is over.
- **Be Flexible:** You may have to meet with a staffer instead of the member, your meeting may be inter-

rupted several times, or you may end up meeting in the hallway or a broom closet-like office. That's ok. Show that you are flexible and understand the circumstances.

- **It's OK to Say "I Don't Know":** While you will no doubt be very prepared for your meeting, it is likely that you will get asked a question that you don't know the answer to. Don't try and make it up or guess; simply tell them you are not sure but that you will get back to them. That also gives you an opportunity to follow up with staff later and continue the conversation.
- **Know Who You Are Talking to:** Research who you will be meeting with and keep that in mind during your conversation. Focus on how the proposed policies may inadvertently harm your employees or suggest alternative language that can be seen as a compromise.
- **Follow Up:** Always follow up with a thank-you note or email and an offer to be of additional help if needed. Staffers are overworked and are often in charge of several different issues they don't know much about. You would be surprised how many times they will follow up with a question or clarification when that offer has been made.

WHO SHOULD I SPEAK TO AT ASA IF I HAVE QUESTIONS OR NEED HELP PREPARING FOR A MEETING?

You should always feel free to reach out to the ASA legal and government affairs team:

- **Toby Malara**, Esq., vice president, government relations (tmalara@americanstaffing.net)
- **Ed Lenz**, Esq., senior counsel (elenz@americanstaffing.net)
- **Brittany Sakata**, Esq., general counsel (bsakata@americanstaffing.net)
- **Stephen Dwyer**, Esq., president (sdwyer@americanstaffing.net)