

Working with legislators

See the wave like legislators see it

Tommy Wells, director of the District of Columbia Department of Energy & Environment, former D.C. Councilmember
Barb Temmerman, executive director and registrar, Manitoba College of Social Workers

“Legislation doesn’t pass just because it’s a good idea.”

Plan for change

- Identify opposing views and assess whether stakeholders are unified.
- Leave room for difficult conversations when engaging with stakeholders.
- Do research and present it to legislators so that members of government have the information they need to bring the matter forward.

Build relationships

- Identify which legislators have oversight of the social work licensing board.
- Identify key contacts.
- Create opportunities for legislators to speak at local events and give them awards.
- Meet with legislators before the legislative session.
- When new people are appointed or elected, make contact early.
- After any success, acknowledge legislators and maintain relationships.

Communicate effectively

- Make your request clear.
- Use bullet points.
- Write sample legislation.
- Tie into election goals and party platform.
- Identify shared priorities.

Get support

- Plan your agenda of goals to take advantage of related events.
- Seek public support and media attention.
- Be sensitive when a crisis happens, but recognize crises can bring attention to public protection.
- Provide support for the initiative to pass. Have constituents make phone calls.
- Engage with like-minded associations.

Think broadly

- Be prepared to negotiate and identify solutions to barriers.
- Accept small accomplishments.
- Brace for unexpected outcomes.

