

SIX IMPORTANT FACTORS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS ABOUT POLITICS, ADVOCATING AND APPROACHING AND DEALING WITH ALASKA STATE GOVERNMENT

1. The Human factor is dominant

Remember to always keep in mind that you are dealing with human beings and that ultimately it is their values, likes and dislikes, that will have a lot of influence on your success or failure in approaching government and getting what you want from it.

2. Understanding the motives, goals and needs of policy-makers

What makes people tick, why they do certain things and what they need to do it, is very important to keep in mind not just in politics but in any situation personal or professional. It is particularly important in a political situation and in advocating. To a great extent, it helps you to predict and anticipate the actions of public officials and plan your approach to them accordingly.

3. The Practical versus the Ideal

We must be able to distinguish between the practical and the ideal in politics (however we might define the ideal). For example, and related to the last point, for some people, accepting that public officials are not primarily doing their job for the “public benefit” (however that might be defined) is hard to swallow. But if you want to be successful, you must put this behind you and deal with the reality and not some ideal that you have in your mind.

4. Understanding the fundamentals of the legislative/administrative process

While the human element, the motives of politicians and understanding the difference between power and authority are very important as fundamentals to be successful in advocating, one still needs to be very familiar with what, in effect, is the organizational chart of state government or the parts of state government with which you need to deal. This is important for many reasons, including how proposals proceed through the process, what people to approach to get what information or to discuss and issue, and also for aiding with the next point—planning the advocating effort.

5. The fundamentals of organizing and executing an advocating campaign:

Advocating is not just about drinking, schmoozing with politicians and having a good time! Though some of that may be involved. Also, success doesn't just happen by chance; though in politics chance can often be a factor.

Successful advocating involves organizing and executing and, as much as possible, orchestrating a campaign. So it may be a surprise to a lot of people that the key to success is planning and modifying the lobby plan, often several times. Advocating involves a lot of hard work, much of it

tedious. It is important to understand the element of organizing and executing a advocacy campaign from the planning stage to dealing with politicians and other public officials to dealing with and building coalitions with other groups and interests to reassessing strategies and tactics should things go wrong. Such organizing and planning requires an understanding and melding of the formal and the informal aspects of the policy process, the institutional structures and the political elements including the goals and motives of policy makers.

6. Having and conveying the right attitude

Many people have particular attitudes toward politicians and government officials. For the most part these tend to be skeptical and in some cases negative. But while holding such opinions is everyone's right, one should take great pains in advocating not to convey a negative attitude towards public officials or to give the impression that you believe they "work for you"! No one, including public officials and lobbyists, want to be given the impression that you are disdainful of them or that you believe they should do your bidding. If you convey these impressions, the chances are they will not tell you that you are doing so, but they'll be passive aggressive and just not help you unless you have some other influence over them.