Best Practices and Federal Overview

Jim Richards, Partner
Vernie Hubert, Senior Consultant
About the Process

Farm Bill
Farm Bill Process

• House and Senate Agriculture Committees hold hearings and call witnesses
• Each committee begins drafting its version of the farm bill
• Some differences are reconciled immediately
• Once each chamber passes a bill, conference negotiations begin
• Current Farm Bill expires September 30, 2018
• That’s how it usually works...
Farm Bill Process

- Testify at House/Senate Ag hearings to prepare for the farm bill
- Update and reauthorize the Wool Marketing Loan (LDP)
- Sheep Center – re-up the $1.5 million?
- NRSP-7
- FMD Vaccine Bank
- Wool Trust Fund Extension
2017 POTUS and CONGRESS

- Personnel—WOTUS—Guest Workers—Tax Reform—Reg Relief—ACA—Infrastructure—Trade
- Bighorn language and regulatory relief from new Administration—top short term priority
- FY17 and 18 Approps
  - New position(s) and funding for USSES
  - BHS language
  - Small ruminant funding
  - Strengthen WS livestock protection
Best Practices for Successful Engagement

Use it or LOSE it!
Face-to-Face Meetings

• Personal meetings are the most effective way to communicate with a Member of Congress and staff.

• Members receive dozens of requests everyday – you must convince the scheduler and Member that an appointment with you is worthwhile.

• Face-to Face meetings with Members are rare – don’t be disappointed to meet with staff.

• Pass along the same message. There is more opportunity to follow-up on your issue if you meet with staff.
Face-to-Face Meetings

Do make an appointment for you and a small group.

Don’t show up to the office without an appointment.

Do be flexible; schedules change rapidly.

Don’t show up too early or too late.

Do meet with staff when given the opportunity.

Don’t spend a lot of time on chit-chat. Begin your meeting with substance.

Do prepare your pitch before your meeting. You will have 15-25 minutes in total to make your case. Make sure your substance is succinct.
Email

• Members and staff have a strong preference for email – especially for follow-up.
• However, they suffer from extreme overload.
• Impetrate to engage without being a pest.
Telephone

- Congressional offices have one published phone number with one or more Staff Assistants and/or interns answering.
- If you are placing a call to a specific staff member, go through the main line, unless otherwise directed.
- On the phone: 1) identify yourself, 2) get straight to the point, 3) be patient and polite, and 4) always say thank you.
Postal Mail

• Mail to Congress is decontaminated – a process that significantly delays delivery.
• This communication method is almost completely useless, unless you are directed by staff to do so.
• If so, send to State/District office staff as they can send directly to DC minus irradiation.
What is this?
Personal Messages Matter

• Personal communication from actual constituents is the most EFFECTIVE way to influence. BREAK IT DOWN!

• Explaining how a particular regulation or law affects your operation is the winning message.

• Form letters or emails do not make a big difference.
Phone calls matter when...

• Member’s office receives a high volume of calls on a specific subject from constituents=ATTENTION.

• But it’s only effective if EVERYONE PARTICIPATES.

• You will be notified by ASI when there is a CALL TO ACTION. Answer that call with engagement.
Hill and Home Again
Prepare for Fly-In

• Before going to Washington, you should touch base with the staff that you know, and the staff that you intend to meet with.

• A simple and short email saying
  o You look forward to seeing them (again)
  o You look forward to discussing _____ issues
  o Thank them for all of their work and support
After the Fly-In

• STAY ENGAGED!!!
• Send a Thank You email, or letter.
  o Offer to be an industry resource if they have questions.
• If you agree to follow up with more information....... DO IT!
• If they agree to follow up with you, send gentle reminders.
About the Process

Appropriations
Budget/Appropriations 101

• Two-step process:
  o President “proposes”
  o Congress “disposes”

• President’s Budget Request – by Feb??

• Congressional Budget Resolution

• Congressional Appropriations
President’s Budget Request

- Developed over several years
- Usually released in early February
- Details how funds will be spent
- Just a starting point – Congress has “power of the purse”
Congressional Appropriations

• Main focus at subcommittee-level
  o 12 subcommittees (including Ag and Interior)
  o Each gets spending ceiling and writes own bill

• Process: House > Senate > Conference
  o Bill are supposed to be complete by Oct. 1
  o Rarely happens
Current Landscape

- Still operating under the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015
- FY 2017 appropriations still not complete
  - Continuing appropriations through April 28, 2017. After that... will they pass a new bill? or just continue?
- Meanwhile, FY 2018 process will start with President’s Budget Request... maybe in February? Nah. March, Maybe? April or May, go to the pay window?
Why do we care?

- Domestic and Bighorn Sheep grazing
- U.S. Sheep Experiment Station funding
- Wildlife Services funding
- APHIS Scrapie eradication funding
What ASI Will Provide

- Email for state executives to request congressional meetings
- Provide the hotlink to the ASI legislative action center in newsletter and calls to action to remind folks it is there to assist them
- Issues book
- Excellent service
Smokey Bear and Uncle Sam
Questions?