1. Be fair and respectful toward public officials.

2. Avoid cynicism. Government may be faulty, but so is every other profession.


4. Be friendly. Don’t contact public officials only when you want their help.

5. Be reasonable. Recognize that there are legitimate differences of opinion.


7. Be charitable. The failure of public officials to do what you wanted may be your responsibility if you have not done a good job in preparing your case.

8. Be constructive. You don’t like to be scolded, pestered or preached to—and neither do they.

9. Be realistic and persistent. Remember that controversial legislation and regulation usually result in a compromise not wholly satisfactory to any one contending party.

10. Be practical. Recognize that each lawmaker has commitments and that a certain amount of vote-trading goes on in all legislatures.


12. Be informed. Do your homework. The mere fact that you want a public official to adopt your position won’t be enough.

13. Be loyal and trustworthy. Never leave officials out on a limb by changing your position after they have publicly taken the position that you have urged upon them.

14. Be discreet. Participation in discussions about lawmakers being “bought” or “paid off” is worse than useless.

15. Be generous. Remember that in success everyone can claim credit. Thank policymakers for their positive acts at least as often as you inquire why they went wrong.

16. Be visionary. Especially when it comes to the political process, there is seldom an absolute defeat. A loss with one member may lead to finding a champion elsewhere.

On Wednesday: Guidelines for Effective Advocacy.

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