



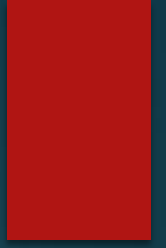
Building a Successful Legislative Office

BEN FREDERICK

ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT, ADVOCACY & GOVT. RELATIONS, MEMORIAL HEALTHCARE

FORMER HOUSE MAJORITY FLOOR LEADER

WELCOME!



Job One: Service



Challenge...

Expectations regarding government and elected officials (and by extension, their staffs) have never been lower.



Opportunity!

These low expectations are easy to exceed through professional conduct and superb constituent services.



Why a service focus?

Perception becomes reality

Opportunity to engage outside of
political context

Relationship building

Costs only our time



And...

IT'S WHY WE'RE HERE.



Staff Basics

Roles (People, not furniture)

Legislative Aide/Constituent Services

Legislative Aide/Policy Services


Chief of Staff/Admin (Senate)

Constituent Aide

- The frontline contact for office-to-district
- Constituent Casework management
- Schedule management
- Manage daily needs of the office
- Coordinate internships
- Capitol Tours & District Events
- Phones
- Additional opportunities based upon interest and experience.

Legislative Aide

- Functions as the lead staffer, possesses familiarity with the legislative landscape.
- Strategist to and advocate for the member
- Media relations.
- Prepare necessary analyses/briefs for member
- Discern important vs. unimportant
- Office administration, including office budget management and personnel duties.
- Legislative workflow management to include all bills, committees and session.
- Second set of eyes on all written correspondence
- Represent member at key district functions, workgroups, committee testimony, etc



“Not my Job” is not in
the vocabulary of a
successful office

Staff Competencies

Professionalism

Writing and Speaking

Empathy

Advocacy

Analysis/Synthesis

Discretion/Insight

Organization/Workflow Mngmt



“Only Contact Rule”

“Treat each outreach to your office as the only time that constituent will be in contact with their government.”



Landscape

People are hurting & desperate

Government agencies and elected officials are seen as impersonal and untrustworthy

Technology – bulk email boxes, phone trees

“Don’t call us, we’ll call you.”

Loss of customer service culture in public sector

Remote work shortcomings

Professionalism & Mindset

You are an extension of the legislator at all times

Public trust is always on the line

Maintain a degree of formality in interactions

Professional manner & appearance

You can only control how **you** approach this work

These behaviors will affect interactions &
opportunities

Organization/Time Management

Many good systems

Coherence across positions – Constituent Services, Policy Services and interns (and Representative!)

24-48 hour response rule; other timetables

Reciprocate level of personal touch – handwritten letter vs crate of petitions. Form for form, personal for personal.

Look for personalization in form emails.

Schedule Management

Structure within a system

Schedule regular staff meetings and stick to them!

Prioritize based upon member interest, committee assignment and district significance (district gets priority)

Ask about constituents – get names

Involve team in process – assign staff coverage respectfully

Work out needs for district representation collaboratively

Watch for trip points (active and passive)

Follow up

Constituent Service: On the Phone

Smile on the phone (It works and they can tell)

State who you are and who the representative is.

Empathy

Precision (get the details)

Guide the conversation as necessary but don't supplant.

Set parameters on duration if necessary.

Assume you're being recorded

Constituent Service: On the Phone (cont.)

Set clear expectations every time:

“Will get you an answer even if it’s not the answer we are seeking”

I will need your _____. Here is how it will be used, and how long it will be retained.

I’ve typically seen a response from the department within _____.

Let me find that out vs. I don’t know

Never passive! “They’ll be in touch with you. Call me back in a few days if you don’t hear from them.”

Always take responsibility for next step:

“You will be hearing from me by Friday.”

Constituent Service: Email

Similar rules to phone calls. (Smiling optional, but still helps).

Inflow management essential. Set up filters now for publications, updates, internal notifications, etc., so the constituent outreach stands out more.

Set up filters for mass communication

Look for personalizations even within mass emails (potential intern project)

Form for form.

If a constituent case is complex or raises a lot of questions, call vs email for more personal contact and often more efficient process.

Do research, consult Representative, department liaisons, policy staff & other resources!

Write well and seek professional development opportunities & help as needed.

Consider all emails public record.

Social Media

Whenever possible, staff should manage social media pages and look through regularly for constituent outreach/messages.

Search tags for potential engagement, critiques (which could become wins!)

Don't have constituent reach out on different medium – begin intake directly from platform.

You are speaking in voice of the Representative – this is the most visible medium

Most mud to slog through to get quality interactions

Be careful of time investment vs. value

Remember vagaries in law about public forums/representative personal pages

Assume everything you write is immediately turned into a screenshot.

Constituent Service: General Intake Tips

“Let me find out” works.

You speak for the legislator – this should inform your thinking and conduct.

Consistency.

Mention the legislator as an active participant in the process

Setting expectations cannot be overstated.

Be active in promises vs passive.

Sometimes calls are setups – assume you are being recorded.

Constituent Service: Involving the Legislator

When? All the time! “Representative/Senator _____ and I are...”

Consistently throughout the process.

Trends discussion, notables ongoing in staff meetings

Flag items immediately with external/pr implications

Intervention-based when required.

After successful completion of case. Road time, District work periods

Constituent case incumbency mail

Make sure the legislator is on board with your program!

Advocacy

Be courteous to department liaisons.

Have as much information needed as possible in first outreach.

Don't leave to just email. Be kind but persistent.

Get time commitments whenever possible; names even better.

Organize with other staff/representatives if impediments to service are endemic.

Use discernment and involve other staff and representative as needed vs simply forwarding responses.

Synthesize and refine – create new email responses, check with liaisons or other sources on content forwards.

You are the advocate for your constituent on behalf of the legislator.

Discretion & Ethics

With Constituents

Be respectful of constituent privacy and sensitive information.

Share your office's policy about use/retention of social security numbers, case document or electronic record retention, etc., and then follow it.

Do not allow drifting into non-legislative topics

With the Lobby Corps

No interaction on non-legislative activities on state time or property

Easier or convenient doesn't mean proper or ethical

Be courteous; you don't work for them.

Within yourself

Know the law; establish boundaries and follow them

Trust your instincts and any tension/conflict you feel – consult with others

Constituent Outreach Tips

“Weaving incumbency tight...”

Implement Courtesy Follow Up Program

Lamination Program

Booklet stations & schools

Constituent Contact Doors

Call Sheets

District Volunteers

Clip and save / Mail

Testimonials – tell their stories

Structure meaningful Internships

Self-Care: You Matter!

- Utilize support services and mentorship opportunities (peers, Business Office offerings, team building) vs going it alone.
- Space out interactions, particularly if subject matter or conversation is highly emotional.
- Resolve ethical dilemmas quickly and hold to established personal boundaries.
- Places and relationships of safety.
- Prioritize work-life balance (Reward of organized workflow should be more work-life balance)

Final Thoughts

Prompt, professional and attentive customer service with the public trust in mind should be the foundation of your legislative work.

A mindset of service is job one.

The legislator will know in short order whether or not they have a service-oriented office!

Resources:

Communications Primers – NCSL, New Office Professional's Handbook/Templates

Department Liaisons

Multiclient & Corporate Lobbyists

Colleagues/staff with policy experience

Caucus Policy/Comms Teams

LSB Research

Third Party Research/Advocacy Groups

IPPSR!



Building a Successful Legislative Office

BEN FREDERICK

ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT, ADVOCACY & GOVT. RELATIONS, MEMORIAL HEALTHCARE

FORMER HOUSE MAJORITY FLOOR LEADER

BENJAMINRFREDERICK@GMAIL.COM 989-272-3413