How to Make the Right Connections
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Overview

• Purpose of My Remarks
• Current Political Environment
• The New Political Paradigm
• Tools to Influence Public Policy
• Political Influence Model
• How to Make the Right Connections
• Purpose
Purpose

- Dentists must have the ability to powerfully advocate on issues that affect your future.
- Building and maintaining an effective network is critical to achieving this goal.
Three Essential Realities Of Our Political System

– Produces winners and losers

– It is constantly changing

– Highly competitive, special interest democracy
The New Political Paradigm

- Everything is different!
- Much more competitive political environment
- New sources of political money
- Divided, divided government
- Polarized voter base
- Record low approval numbers for Congress
New Sources of Political Money

Outside Spending by Cycle thru October 17th of election year, Excluding Party Committees

See entire cycle | Cycle-to-date
Polarized Voter Base

Democrats and Republicans More Ideologically Divided than in the Past

Distribution of Democrats and Republicans on a 10-item scale of political values

1994
DEMOCRATS
MEDIAN Democrat
Consistently liberal

REPUBLICANS
MEDIAN Republican
Consistently conservative

2004
DEMOCRATS
MEDIAN Democrat
Consistently liberal

REPUBLICANS
MEDIAN Republican
Consistently conservative

2014
DEMOCRATS
MEDIAN Democrat
Consistently liberal

REPUBLICANS
MEDIAN Republican
Consistently conservative

Source: 2014 Political Polarization in the American Public
Notes: Ideological consistency based on a scale of 10 political values questions (see Appendix A). The blue area in this chart represents the ideological distribution of Democrats; the red area of Republicans. The overlap of these two distributions is shaded purple. Republicans include Republican-leaning independents; Democrats include Democratic-leaning independents (see Appendix B).

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Tools Available to Influence Public Policy

Persuasion vs Political Power

• Are you an effective advocate?
• Does your profession have a voice?
Political Influence Model

Average Congressional District – 731,000 people
Get Involved

– ASDA/ADA/ADPAC
– Your University
– Local Political Organizations
– Other Civic Groups
Know Your Elected Officials

- Better yet, know the staff
Know Your Elected Officials

• In 2016 the average winning Senate candidate spent ~$10.4M to win
• In 2016 the average winning House candidate spent ~$1.5M to win
• State races are increasingly expensive
• Do not overlook the important policy decisions that are being made in state capitals
Know Your Elected Officials

• Average House member has been in office less than 10 years
• Average Senator has been in office just over 10 years
• Seldom few are experts of any sort
• Even less know anything about your profession beyond sitting in a chair
Understand Your Audience

• Average Congressional staffer is young and short tenured
• Average Congressional staffer handles a broad issue portfolio that includes multiple topics that may have little relation to one another
• Average Congressional staffer is under paid and works for an office that is under-resourced
• Thus, an opportunity...
These Realities Create Opportunities for You

• As a professional – whether a student or practicing dentist – you are an “expert” to your audience
• Being recognized as such and maintaining strong connections will ensure you can effectively advocate before this audience
• Others are doing the same
How to Create Lasting Connections

• Meet your lawmaker
• Follow up with staff
• Maintain contact
• Become a resource
• Get involved
What’s the Point?

• Being civic minded!

• Creating and maintaining lasting political power when it’s increasingly difficult to do so

• Protecting your profession
Questions?