

Great Start Workshop:
What you should know about working with legislators
and the Legislature!

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**The Organization of State
Government**

- ❖ 3 branches of Government
 - ❖ Executive Branch (Governor) controls the Divisions of State Government
 - ❖ Legislative Branch initiates policy and budgets
 - ❖ Judicial Branch is provides the legal system
- ❖ The legislature is Bicameral
 - ❖ 2 chambers... Senate (67 members), 70,000 constituents, 4 year terms (usually)
 - ❖ House of Representatives (134 members), 35,000 constituents, 2 year terms
- ❖ Senate & House Districts are created by the legislature itself and are redrawn every 10 years

Legislature meets on a 2 year cycle

- ❖ First year
 - ❖ Odd numbered year.... longer session
 - ❖ Addresses state budget
- ❖ Second year
 - ❖ Even numbered year.... shorter session
 - ❖ Creates the Capital budget and does supplemental legislation
- ❖ Majority party essentially controls a Chamber. Governor also belongs to a party. Compromise is required!

K-12 Education Committees

- ❖ Senate has a single K-12 Committee
- ❖ House has a K-12 Finance Committee and a K-12 Policy Committee (now called the Education Reform Committee)

Working with legislators in your area

- ❖ Why Advocacy is important:
 - ❖ Grassroots lobbying engages everyday people, not just politicians
 - ❖ Grassroots lobbying puts a human face on policy issues
 - ❖ Grassroots lobbying provides strength thru numbers
 - ❖ The legislators NEED information
 - ❖ Legislators like to hear from their own constituents
 - ❖ Recipe: 1 call, 1 letter, 1 meeting
 - ❖ You build legislative champions for the times you really need it!

Being a Citizen Lobbyist

- ❖ Write letters or e-mails. Let legislators know your personal thoughts and experiences on an issue. Provide background information.
- ❖ Invite legislators to tour your schools or attend a Board meeting
- ❖ Meet your legislators at their Capitol office
- ❖ Attend legislative 'town' meetings
- ❖ Become involved in professional organizations
- ❖ Pay attention to the electoral process

Keys to Communicating

- ❖ Know your audience
- ❖ Just the facts. Keep them short and sweet
- ❖ Personalize your messages
- ❖ The messenger matters.... you are the experts
- ❖ Keep it simple. Don't assume your legislator knows the issue. Localize the issue
- ❖ Connect all during the year
- ❖ Know your legislator:
 - ❖ Political affiliation
 - ❖ District they represent and committees on which they serve
 - ❖ Their connection to your community

Where do you find legislative information

- ❖ www.leg.state.mn.us

MASA's role at the Capitol

- ❖ Valerie Dosland is the head lobbyist for MASA
- ❖ Gary Amoroso will have a strategic role
- ❖ Participate in regional visits to the Capitol
- ❖ Contact legislators at critical points during the legislative session

Other groups influencing K-12 Education

- ❖ Mn Dep't of Education
- ❖ MSBA, ED MN, Principal's associations, MREA, SEE, AMSD, MSHSL, Parents groups, Charter School Association, Private Scholls Association
- ❖ MN Chamber of Commerce, MN Business Partnership, Higher Education entities

Federal Advocacy... another MASA strength

- ❖ MASA has a Federal Advocacy Committee and they meet annually with US Senators and Representatives
- ❖ MASA maintains relationship with congressional staff members
- ❖ MASA brings 4-6 members to Washington, DC each year and works with AASA staff on federal legislation

Federal representation from Minnesota

- ❖ Senators:
 - ❖ Senators Klobuchar and Franken
 - ❖ Each serves a 6 year term
- ❖ Congressional representatives:
 - ❖ 8 congressional districts
 - ❖ Rep Walz, Kline, Paulson, Bachmann, Ellison, McCollum, Peterson, & Cravaack
 - ❖ Each serves a 2 year term
 - ❖ Redistricting occurs every 10 years and is underway now

Mistakes to avoid

- ❖ Not engaging until you need something. This is a 'relationship' business!
- ❖ Don't underestimate the value of developing longterm relationships with both elected officials and staff.
- ❖ Don't make enemies unless absolutely necessary.
- ❖ Remember that the majority changes regularly and elected officials gain and lose power.

Your questions
