

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a set of keys. The hand is positioned in the upper left quadrant, with the keys hanging down towards the center. The background is blurred, showing another hand reaching up from the bottom. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark blue filter. A white double-line border frames the central text area.

# How to Advocate to Policymakers

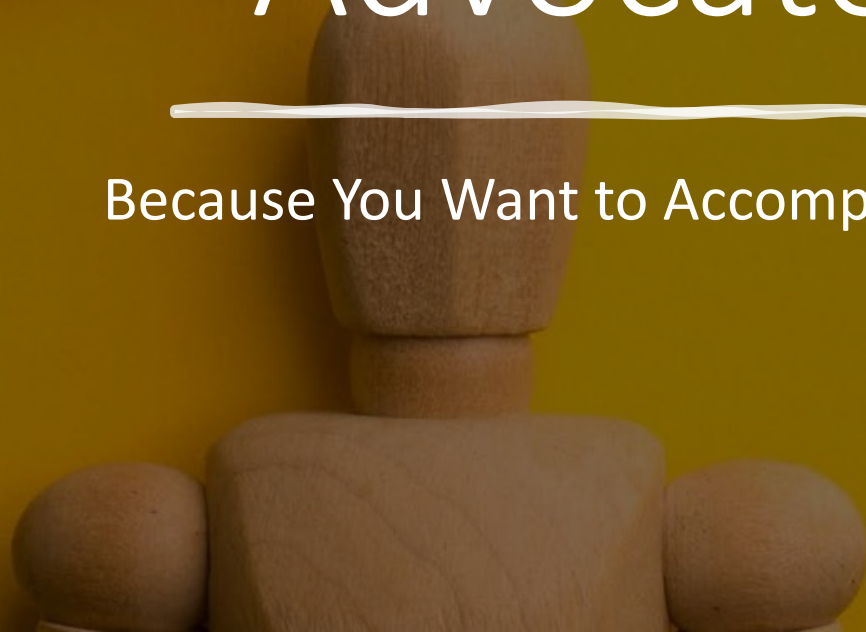
Natch Greyes, NHMA & Katherine Heck, NHMA



# Why Do You Want to Advocate?

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Because You Want to Accomplish a Goal



# Always Remember the Purpose of Advocacy: To Accomplish a Goal



IN ADVOCATING, YOU WANT TO  
HAVE A CLEARLY DEFINED GOAL.



ALL OF YOUR ACTIONS SHOULD LEAD  
TO ACCOMPLISHING THAT GOAL.



THEREFORE, *ALSO* AVOID ANYTHING  
DETRIMENTAL TO THE GOAL.

# Stay Informed

- The Legislative Bulletin is NHMA's primary means of communicating legislative information to member towns and cities.
  - Sent via email and posted on the [NHMA website](#).
- The Legislative Bulletin highlights important bills as they move through the legislative process.
- It also serves as a communication vehicle for action needed from your municipality, including :
  - Requests for letters or calls in support or opposition.
  - In person testimony
- Occasionally, NHMA issues legislative alerts by email for special purposes, during legislative session.
- NHMA hosts a series of webinars during the session to brief members on the key bills impacting NH municipalities , their effect if passed by the legislature, current status, and any action needed by member towns and cities.

# Ways to Engage your Legislator

- ✓ Provide your legislators with summaries of issues that are important to your town or city;
  - ✓ include accurate facts and data.
- ✓ Invite them to address a council meeting;
  - ✓ participate in city/town-hosted events;
  - ✓ visit public meeting
  - ✓ highlight projects or facilities that are important to your municipality
- ✓ Conduct “informal” meetings;
  - ✓ invite business and community leaders, non-profit partner and other stakeholder groups.
- ✓ Respond to NHMA Legislative Bulletin or a legislative alert will frequently ask for your assistance in analyzing the effects of a bill or in communicating with legislators.

# Politics Makes Advocacy Hard

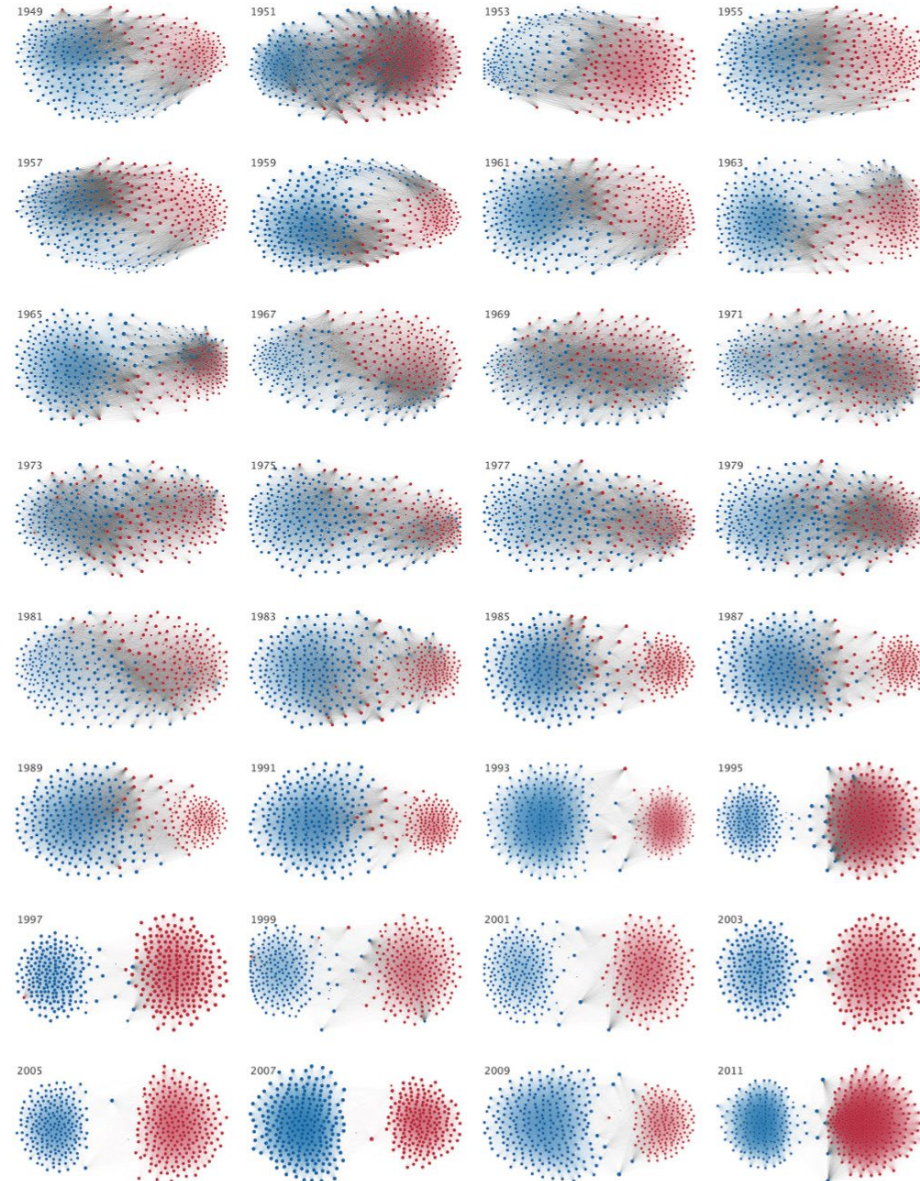
Whatever your goal is, you have to navigate the realities of politics.

There is significant division between the two major parties.

There is *also* significant division between groups within the two major parties.

And, of course, you are also dealing with people, and some people just don't like some other people.

# The Political Divide in Congress



# New Hampshire is not Unique

- “Before my research [during the summer of 2020], I believed that at the state level, politicians compromised and helped solve issues for the state, as opposed to catering to party interests like at the national level, a belief I suspect is held by many people uninformed on state politics. I had hoped that our state politicians would put party differences and petty politics aside in pursuit of the best outcome for the people of New Hampshire, however, my research showed the exact opposite.”
  - - Ben Mackillop, [Why Is Our Politics So Polarized? The New Hampshire Political System and the Rural/Urban Split](#), UNH Undergraduate Research Journal Spring 2021.



# How Do We Overcome The Political Divide?

By Building  
Relationships

# Consider Putting Someone in Charge

- Assign the responsibility

Reviewing the legislative bulletin and any legislative alerts and coordinating a timely response from your municipality.

This person may be the mayor, city/town manager or administrator or another key official.

Establishing a working relationship with your legislators as part of your job as an advocate for your municipality.

Ensuring your legislators understand how their decisions affect your community.



# Relationships Start At Home

- Everyone has some particular expertise, and when we're talking about municipal operations and governance, there are no better experts than local officials.
- You have the ability to do things, like arrange a tour of the municipal wastewater facility, a ride along with a police officer, or a tour of the town clerk's office.
- These efforts can help educate legislators in an environment that removes the political bent to what they hear in Concord.

# Aim to Build Authentic Relationships

Two Kinds of Relationships:  
Transactional & Relational

Ask yourself, "What is my  
intention for this  
relationship?"

Start with the right intent.

**Transactional:** I want to get  
what I need from them.

**Relational:** I want a trusted  
relationship in which both  
parties look for ways to  
benefit each other.

# First Step: Positive Reinforcement



- Positive reinforcement is a process that strengthens the likelihood of a particular response by adding a stimulus after the behavior is performed.
  - E.g. “Thank You Messages”
- Negative reinforcement also strengthens the likelihood of a particular response, but by removing an undesirable consequence.
  - E.g. Shaming Messages.

# Leave Politics at the Door

We are constantly labeling our experiences (good, bad, ugly) and sometimes this includes the people we connect with or the party to which they belong.

By being mindful of the commentary in our brains, we can prevent judgement from standing in the way of our authentic connection and influence.

If we spend our time arguing about something irrelevant, we won't ever get to our goal, much less accomplish it.

# Engage with Meaningful Questions

- A great way to develop a stronger connection with someone is to ask questions that create positive, shared emotion. Ask questions like:
  - “What do you like most about your role?”
  - “What do you most want to know about municipal functions?”
- Use the answers to facilitate opportunities for hands-on learning experiences.
  - *E.g.* tours of wastewater plants, ride-alongs, *etc.*

# Pay Attention

- Most of the time, when we listen, we only pay partial attention to what someone else is saying because we're busy thinking about what we want to say.
- Take a moment to reflect what the other person is feeling back to them – repeating their points (as appropriate) and mirroring their body language.
- Doing this helps the speaker feel understood and valued and helps create a more authentic connection.



# Share Personal Anecdotes

- When we share something personal (for example, a dream we have for the future, a childhood memory, a personal story about a sad or happy time, a meaningful experience), we send a signal to the other person that we trust them.
- Research shows that when we are willing to open up and show someone that we trust them, they become more trustworthy and open, which allows us to influence them more effectively.

# Compare these Conversations

## Cold Call

- Hi Representative Smith, I'm (\_\_\_) with the town of (\_\_\_) and I wanted to ask you to vote "no" on HB (\_\_\_) because it's going to make it more difficult for (town official) to do their job.

## Authentic Relationship

- Hi Joe. I don't know if you've looked at HB (\_\_\_) but it's going to be a huge problem for us.

In the first conversation, the speaker must introduce him/herself AND get buy in. In the second conversation, the person *already* knows who the speaker is AND there is probably already some sort of buy in\*

\*Assuming the pitcher isn't going to the well too often.



# Write to Your Legislators

- Letter writing can be effective in educating your state legislators on issues and concerns in your municipality.
  - Use NHMA's background material provided in the legislative bulletin as a basis for communication.
  - Use your own words and incorporate your town or city's specific examples and data.
- 
- ✓ Keep NHMA staff informed- there is power in numbers!
  - ✓ Send copies of your letters or emails to the NHMA's legislative advocacy staff.  
[governmentaffairs@nhmunicipal.org](mailto:governmentaffairs@nhmunicipal.org)
  - ✓ NHMA's legislative team reads your letters, incorporates your arguments and local circumstances into our testimony, and cites your letters when we talk with your legislators.



“Dripping water hollows out stone, not through force but through persistence.”

- Ovid



The background features a pattern of interlocking puzzle pieces in shades of teal and grey. Several question marks are scattered across the pieces. In the center, a lightbulb is depicted with lines radiating from it, symbolizing an idea or insight.

# Most Common Mistakes?



Don't be the pitcher that goes to the well once too often!

# Don't Forget Your Legislators Represent All The Constituents In Your Area



Your Legislators' s duty is to represent *ALL* the people to the best of their ability.

Try to understand their challenges, outlook, and objectives.

Build bridges even when your senator or representative disagrees on an issue.

Most legislation is the result of compromise—that's the way the system operates.

# Have a Plan for Action

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- Establish a plan for taking a position, remember, these are your municipality's positions, not your personal positions, which is why a high-level key official should have to role of reviewing and acting on legislative matters.
- A quick and simple method to get that call made is recommended.
- Establish a procedure for urgent (one-day) action on bills.





# Don't Embarrass Legislators Unnecessarily

- It's much more effective to sit down with a legislator in private to discuss areas of disagreement.
- Once someone cares enough about an idea to take the effort to put together a bill, they take ownership of that idea.
- This often leads to them conflating opinions about an idea with opinions about them. It's the difference between:
  - "I didn't say he was a nut. I said he was *acting* like a nut."
- Take the time to have a private communication expressing your concern. It gives the sponsor time to consider whether to save face by withdrawing the bill or asking for it to be killed, or whether to press ahead.
- Taking a legislator to task in a public forum for votes on less weighty issues can lose their support on much more vital issues.

# Don't Confuse a Public Hearing for a Courtroom



*Ex parte* communication happens all the time between bill sponsors and committee members and party leadership and lobbyists.



Thinking that a public hearing is a contest where the person who thinks fastest on their feet ignores the reality that the bill sponsor can easily ask party leadership or their friends to lean on a committee.



Most of the time, the decision about what a committee will do with a bill happens somewhere outside of the public hearing.

# Be Prepared to Act... Quickly!

The session is fast paced:

- ❖ Requests for bill reviews, and letters and phone calls in support or opposition are time sensitive.
- ❖ Keep track of your positions and responses and provide NHMA with copies of letters that you write in response to a NHMA advocacy request.
- ❖ Bills can be amended, so it's important that you continue to respond immediately to requests for letters even if you wrote a letter at an earlier point in the process.
- ❖ The session is not over until both the House and Senate agree on the same version of the bill – and it is signed by the Governor!

# Don't Forget to Attend All Relevant Hearings

- A bill's first real public appearance is at a committee hearing in the chamber where the prime sponsor sits.
- If the bill passes that chamber, it still must go through a committee hearing on the other side!
- That means, if all goes well, you'll have to talk about it twice!

# Don't Forget to Follow-up

## Remember

Remember positive reinforcement? Thank sponsors for the efforts along the way, even if the bill fails. Thank legislators regularly and publicly for their work, support, and votes.

## Review

Review notes, hearing footage, etc., to ensure that you didn't volunteer to provide something additional to the committee or a member of the committee. If you did, follow through.

Don't Forget  
to Include  
NHMA Early  
in the  
Discussion

NHMA advocates for its members, and we rely on our members to tell us what they're interested in.

(Remember that we have 234 member municipalities and 424 legislators to keep track of – that's a lot of people and ideas!)

We are a resource for legislators seeking information about municipal operations, so it's likely that we'll get asked about your idea at some point, and we'd like to be on the same page (if possible).

(And we'll let you know if you really need legislation to do what you want)

We basically live at the legislature from January-to-June, so we can provide valuable insight into the likelihood of accomplishing your goal.

# Engage with NHMA's New Software: Subscribe to Bills that Interest YOU!



Economic  
Development



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 NH 2023 **LSR 2023-0033** 

relative to the operation of certain homeowners' associations.

 Laurel Stavis  Latha Mangipudi  Chuck Grassie

[Track Bill](#)

 NH 2023 **LSR 2023-0055** 

relative to the transfer of residential property.

 Joshua Adjutant  Chuck Grassie  Peter Petrigno

[Track Bill](#)

 NH 2023 **LSR 2023-0019** 

enabling municipalities to adopt rental practice regulations.

 Ellen Read  Eric Gallager

[Track Bill](#)

 NH 2023 **LSR 2023-0081** 

relative to requiring towns and school districts to use warrant articles for lobbying agents.



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NH 2023 LSR 200

relative to the operation

Laurel Stavis

Track Bill

NH 2023 LSR 200

relative to the transfer

Joshua Adjutant

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NH 2023 LSR 200

enabling municipalities

Ellen Read

Track Bill

NH 2023 LSR 2023-0081

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# Thank You!

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