Tips for Engaging Elected Officials

Mickey Ferrell, Michael Douglas Ferrell, LLC
Stacey Stegman, Senior Vice President of Communications and Customer Service, Denver International Airport
Know your event

• Serious policy discussion, celebration, informal briefing, casual discussion, etc.
• Each setting requires tailored communication
• Each setting presents a unique opportunity to convey your message
• Take advantage of the moment to build relationships
• Talk with purpose to meet a particular goal
Know your elected officials

• Do your research
  • Have you read their biography?
  • What are their interests?
  • What are their goals in office?
  • What committees do they serve on?

• Get to know their staff
  • They influence their elected official
  • Make them your advocate
Know what you want to convey

• Determine the appropriateness of your message for the setting
• Does your message fit within the time constraint?
• Don’t overburden with details unless they ask for more information
• Less is more
• Tell them why they should be interested
• Leave information behind (fact sheets, general information, white papers)
Build relationships

Applies to staff and elected officials:
• Reach out to make introductions
• Invite them to tour your airport
• Invite them to your events
• Introduce yourself at every opportunity
• Check in from time to time at relevant opportunities
What do elected officials need?

• To be effective, elected officials have to be in office (local, state and federal)
• Recognition
  • Thank them publicly and generously
  • Get them media coverage
  • Give them credit
  • Allow them to be the face of a success
How can you help your elected officials?

- Provide simple, concise talking points
- Tell them how they can help you
- Build trust
- Get them involved
- Stay in touch
What is the benefit?

- Promoter and defender in the community
  - They can communicate your side of the story
  - They won’t side with your detractors
- Third party credibility
- Support for funding/grants