

DEDICATED TO HELPING BUSINESS ACHIEVE ITS HIGHEST GOALS.



NBAA's Member Guide for Building a Relationship With Your Elected Officials



Why Build a Relationship, and How to Begin

The foundation of America's democracy requires citizens to express their views and concerns with policymakers. Our local, state and federal officials actively depend on advice from constituents to successfully craft and pass legislation that facilitates growth of the nation and local communities. With the variety of issues currently affecting our industry, it is more important than ever to educate policymakers on the real-life impact of proposed legislation.

In developing positions on pending legislation, elected officials listen closely to the constituents whom they know and trust. As such, it is useful to build solid relationships with your elected officials *before* legislation is considered.

Building a strong relationship with your elected officials is an easy process. The National Business Aviation Association (NBAA) has developed this guide to provide a few tips on starting the process.

Get to Know the Issues

Become knowledgeable about the major issues affecting your local airport and the overall general aviation industry. Utilize NBAA's continuously updated web site at www.nbaa.org for issues affecting the entire industry. NBAA's web site also provides specific talking points on business aviation and all active legislative issues affecting our industry. NBAA's staff is always available to help, whether you have questions that need to be addressed or require additional information on specific topics. In addition to the government affairs staff in Washington, NBAA has a regional program including seven regional representatives located throughout the country. For more information on the regional program, visit www.nbaa.org/regional.

Become Active in Your Local Community

Start by developing a long-term working relationship with your airport director. Offer assistance with community-related projects the local airport may be undertaking. For instance, many airports host elected representatives or their staff for tours of the airport or for constituent meetings on-site. If you are able and it is appropriate, offer assistance with these tours, or provide meeting space for officials. On the other hand, if you discover your airport does not promote activities such as these, encourage your airport to host educational tours and town hall meetings to highlight the important role general aviation plays in your local community.

Meet With All of Your Elected Officials

At least once a year, meet with your local, state and federal officials or their staff. It is important that you establish a working relationship with each of your elected officials, so that they know you and the issues that are important to you. As a constituent, your voice is the most important to these legislators and is the best way to educate them about the benefits of general aviation. These individuals make important policy decisions that can directly affect you and your business. In addition, your elected officials generally have local offices, so it is not always necessary to travel to the state capital or Washington to meet with your representatives.

Be Your Own Best Advocate

General aviation is vital to businesses in communities large and small. However, don't assume that your community knows how important business aviation is to the local economy. Share with your local leaders the benefits of business aviation and encourage them to help you promote business aviation wherever possible. Building community allies is vital to communicating the industry's contributions to local communities and the national economy.

Did You Know?

- » Civil aviation contributed over \$900 billion and 11 million jobs to the U.S. economy in 2000, at least 9 percent of the total U.S. gross domestic product.
- » General aviation's annual economic contribution is \$150 billion to the United States national economy.
- » General aviation employs over 1.265 million people, and provides more than \$53 billion in annual net wages.
- » The national aviation system comprises 5,200 airports, of which approximately 500 have commercial service, making general aviation the economic lifeline for thousands of communities. In addition, these airports are critical to:
 - Air transportation
 - Emergency preparedness and response
 - National defense
 - Medical emergencies
 - Postal service
 - Check hauling
 - Agricultural support

To learn more useful facts about business aviation, visit the web site of No Plane No Gain, a joint undertaking of NBAA and the General Aviation Manufacturers Association, located at www.NoPlaneNoGain.org.

How to Make a Visit to Your Elected Official Successful

It is important to realize the impact that local contact has on elected officials. When policymakers hear from constituents, it gets their attention. As a matter of fact, the strongest message is the one that comes from you. Be sure to exercise your right to educate officials about the issues affecting you and your business, and make your voice heard with officials at the local, state and federal levels.

It is essential to have a concise and organized plan for your visit with a policymaker. NBAA has developed the following recommendations to ensure that your meetings are a success.

Scheduling the Meeting

Keep in mind that you do not need to wait until a specific bill is under consideration to meet with your elected officials. As previously noted, you should develop relationships with these individuals before an urgent matter develops.

Elected officials make meeting with their constituents a top priority. However, due to the large amounts of requests these offices receive, most policymakers have their own process for scheduling meetings and answering correspondence from constituents. The vast majority of these offices prefer meetings to be scheduled by e-mail or phone. Security procedures can significantly increase the length of time a traditional piece of mail takes to reach an elected official's office. As a result, most offices will provide a more prompt response through e-mails and phone calls.

Regardless of the form of contact you choose for your elected official's office, be sure to include your name, employer, address, date(s) of availability, contact information and the requested topic of the meeting (even if it is an introductory meeting).

During the Meeting

Arrive early to your meeting. Security lines through any government building can vary drastically. Also, if your elected official or the official's

staff is running either ahead of or behind schedule, be prepared and flexible about the meeting time.

You may meet with a staffer from your representative's office. Knowing the staff is critical to a successful relationship with any official. Much of the work in a government office is performed by the dedicated and talented staffers, so don't underestimate their importance.

Your meeting may be scheduled for approximately 15 to 30 minutes. Be prepared, speak clearly, stay on message, discuss the importance of the issue you are advocating and make sure to clearly state any specific request that you may have for the office.

After the Meeting

After your meeting, make sure you send a thank-you note to your elected official's office for the visit. Also, if the official asked questions to which answers were not readily available, make sure to include any follow-up information in this communication (whether hardcopy letter or e-mail).

Finally, to help you make a personal impression that is vastly different from the dozens of professional lobbyists and grassroots organizations visiting an office, extend an invitation for the official to visit your facility or airport.

Ongoing Communication

Now that you have established contact with your elected official, it is important to keep the relationship alive and nurture it over time. Continue to provide periodic updates to your representative and staff on any additional information related to issues, the industry or your company as it is released.



Meeting Checklist

Before Your Meeting

- ❑ Develop a list of officials and staff contacts for each office you want to meet. (This list should include the chief of staff, scheduler and the legislative assistant assigned to your issue of area (i.e., transportation).
- ❑ Develop an Issue Briefing Packet, which includes background materials to provide to your staffer or member during your meeting. As a resource for planning this Issue Briefing Packet, NBAA provides general and relevant issue information on the NBAA web site. When preparing the packet, make sure to include:
 - An introduction to your company
 - Examples of general aviation's impact to your local economy
 - Issues of importance to you
- ❑ Call or e-mail the office and schedule a meeting (preferably one to two months in advance). Do not be concerned if you have to wait to receive confirmation of a specific time and date of your meeting. These offices often hold periodic scheduling meetings to process constituent meeting requests.
- ❑ Call and confirm one week prior to the meeting.

During Your Meeting

- ❑ Be prompt and arrive early.
- ❑ Stick to your talking points and only cover one or two of the most important issues to you. Be sure to emphasize your company, number of employees and local economic impact.
- ❑ Be sure to hand out your Issue Briefing Packet and business cards before you begin the meeting.
- ❑ Ask for your elected official's support of your issue, but do not make demands.
- ❑ Feel free to have an open and honest discussion of issues, but do not argue with the official or staff members.
- ❑ Ask for business cards and thank them for the opportunity to meet.

After Your Meeting

- ❑ Send a thank-you letter (or e-mail) to each of the representatives or staffers you met with during your visit.
- ❑ If you have any follow-up items, such as answers to questions you did not know during your meeting, make sure you provide those answers with your thank-you note.
- ❑ Periodically keep in touch with your representative's office, feel free to share any relevant press releases and media articles of potential interest, or at the very least, send thank-you notes when they accomplish legislative landmarks to encourage the success of the general aviation industry.
- ❑ Invite your local representative or staffer to visit your facility or airport.

For More Information

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