“All Politics is Local”

The Importance of Grass Roots Legislative Advocacy in the AT Profession

Vicky Graham, M.S., ATC, LAT
NATA-GAC, District 1
EATA, January 2013
A Legislative Presence for the Profession

- Essential for ongoing statutory recognition
- Essential to build relationships w/lawmakers
- New legislators gain more influence over time
- State legislators become federal legislators
- The most effective legislative campaigns have strong grass roots advocacy
- Legislators need to know us
Why It Matters

- Regulation (licensure)
- Statutory recognition
- Threats to regulation
- Evolution of the profession
- Bills that affect the profession negatively
- Bad/improper language in bills

- Proactive is better than reactive!
Purpose of regulation

- To ensure protection of public health, safety, and welfare
- Licensure
- Certification
- Registration
State regulation

- State practice act and/or rules & regulations define scope of practice

- State regulation supersedes certification

- Do you want to practice to the fullest extent of your education & training?
AT Regulation in U.S.
Athlete safety legislation

- Athlete safety issues = opportunities to build relationships
- Support your allies
- Develop new relationships
- Testify at public hearings
- Submit written testimony
- Call or e-mail your legislator
Statutory recognition matters!

- Concussion
- Epi-pens/inhalers
- Glucagon
- Laws related to school sports, emergency preparedness, AEDs, public health issues
Advancing the Profession

- Legislative Advocacy
- Grassroots
- Grasstops
- Making Allies
- Why It Matters
- How You Can Help
10) Governmental Affairs – what’s that?
9) What does this have to do with me?
8) I work at a college. I can already do everything I want.
7) I hate politics…
6) It seems like the same bill is in Congress every year & nothing happens
Top 10 Reasons Excuses

5) I don’t understand the legislative process.
4) They don’t really care what I think.
3) Nothing I say will make a difference.
2) We have licensure, what else matters?
1) I don’t have time.
“You’re either part of the solution or you’re part of the problem.”
Grassroots

“the common or ordinary people, especially as contrasted with the leadership or elite of a political party, social organization, etc.; the rank and file.” dictionary.com
Your legislators work for YOU

- Constituents matter
- They will listen to you
- They need to hear from you on issues you care about

- It doesn’t matter if you voted for them
- It doesn’t matter if you disagree with them about “everything”
Real People, Real Stories

- State legislators are your neighbors
- They know some of the same people you know
- They care about the people in their district
- Real stories resonate!
Grasstops

- Leaders, organizers, influencers
- Legislators & their aides, family, co-workers

*Who do you know?*
- Who are you connected to?
- Who do your connections know?
Grasstops = connections

- Member whose brother is close friends with the Governor’s son
- Member who lives next door to the parents of the counsel for the minority party
- Member whose sister is a legislator
- The husband of a Public Health Committee Co-Chair is the former Orthopedic Team Physician for a D-1 state school located in her district
Connections

- Member lives on the same street as a PH Committee Co-Chair
- Friend of a legislator’s child is an AT major
- Legislator’s brother is the FB coach at a member’s high school
- Your Team MD is a constituent of a key legislator
Relationship building

- Ongoing relationships are important
- Allow us to have the ear of the legislator & aides
- They know who we are & what we do already
- We’ve helped them with bills they care about in the past (AEDs, concussion, etc.)
Get to Know Your Legislators

- E-mail or call about issues you care about
- Attend local legislator events
- Invite your legislator to attend a game & learn about what you do
- Attend AT Lobby Days
Helping Out

- Volunteer during election campaigns
- Send them information (concussion, heat, etc.)
- Let them know your areas of expertise so they can consult you

- Thank them – when they introduce or vote for something you care about
Get Involved

- Pay attention & be informed!
- Understand issues facing the profession
- Discuss issues with colleagues
- Communicate w/state AT leadership
- Respond to legislative alerts
- Get to know your legislators