

## IRRIGATION

# Intro to lobbying

Use these points to guide your advocacy efforts.

By CHAD FORCEY

**W**hile the mere mention of influencing regulatory policy may seem like a long and tough road, the fact is it's becoming a necessary route for irrigation and Green Industry professionals. With demand for water on the rise, legislators and regulatory bodies require the expertise and input of irrigation professionals to shape policy that not only promotes water-use efficiency but helps our industry's interests. In that respect, every irrigation contractor and business owner, big or small, should know how he or she can play a role in influencing public policy.

The Irrigation Association's (IA's) Landscape Water Management Contractor Common Interest Group sponsors regular webinars that offer solutions to issues important to its members. One recent webinar addressed the ways contractors can influence the laws that guide their industry. Greg Mahon, budget and policy specialist for Pennsylvania State Senator Joe Scarnati, offered some tips for irrigation professionals.

► **Define your goals.** Distill them to the most salient points. Even though the legislative process is different in every state, commonalities remain. For instance, legislators and their staff members hear from numerous interest

groups. Keeping your goals simple and easily digestible will help decision makers keep facts straight and help your cause stand out.

► **Speak out and tell your story.**

Don't count on someone else to do it for you. Not only are you advocating for your industry and interests, but you're also offering expertise on the issue. Providing tangible value to legislators on what your issue is—and how it affects the local economy and jobs in their districts—is a top selling point.

► **Build a consensus.** Typically, by the time legislation reaches the floor of any legislature, it has a relatively good chance of passing. It wouldn't have reached that point without widespread support, usually across diverse groups. Broadcasting this value to lawmakers shows that your cause has widespread support across constituencies. Consensus also gives advocates a chance to "take the temperature" of pending legislation along the way. If your lobbying efforts take an unexpected turn, you will likely hear about it from someone in your coalition. These "ear to the ground" relationships are extremely valuable.



Legislators need irrigators' expertise and input, says IA's Chad Forcey.

These points represent the beginnings of an effective strategy to advocate for your interests. Partnering with state or national associations can provide guidance on more detailed tactics, help with coalition building and assist with plans on how to best access legislators and key staff.

Access to legislators and their staffs is only as valuable as the results of the relationships formed from that access. When you effectively provide them with clear goals, a compelling case and a coalition of diverse interests, it will go a long way in the success of your advocacy efforts. **LM**

*Forcey is state affairs director for the IA. Reach him at [ChadForcey@irrigation.org](mailto:ChadForcey@irrigation.org).*

## IA Corner

Save the Date for the  
**2013 Irrigation Show and Education Conference** in Austin, Texas, Nov. 4-8, 2013!



The Irrigation Show offers you opportunities to focus on your know-how, your business, your connections, industry innovations and fun, all in one place. For more information see [irrigationshow.org](http://irrigationshow.org).

Registration is now open for **IA certification exams** in Austin!

For 30 years, IA certification has been the way to tell customers, employers and peers that you know how to get the job done right. ► Go to [irrigation.org/certification](http://irrigation.org/certification) for more on IA's Select Certified program.

**Want to influence the direction of your industry? Join IA today.**

Visit [irrigation.org](http://irrigation.org) for information to grow your business through:

- Utilizing continuing education tools.
- Gaining a competitive edge through professional certification.
- Influencing water-use public policy at the local, state, regional and national levels.
- Ensuring irrigation interests are represented in industry standards and codes development.