Citizen Engineer

The Public Role of the Licensed Professional Engineer

Ron Gaches, J.D.
Citizen

- An inhabitant of a city or town
- One entitled to the rights and privileges of a freeman
- A member of a state
- A person owing allegiance to and entitled to the protection of a sovereign state
Citizen Engineer

A socially conscious engineer engaged in proactively tackling the enormous challenges that face the world today.

ASEE President Sherra Kerns
Citizen Engineer

A Professional Engineer who is fully engaged in the public affairs of their community
Why the Public Arena is Important

• Public officials make the rules that govern your profession
• Public officials apply the rules that govern your profession
• Public officials make decisions based on what they know
• Public officials listen to the public
Why the Public Arena is Important

• Problem solving for public issues requires the input and analytic skills of Professional Engineers

• Public officials don’t know what you do or why your are important unless you tell them
Public gives Engineers High Marks for Honesty & Ethics

• Public gives engineers high marks for Honesty/Ethics
• Gallup Poll – engineers rank third at 70%
• Behind law enforcement (81%) and nurses (80%).
• Ahead of doctors & pharmacists (both 65%)
• Lawyers (21%), Car Salesmen (7%)
• Congress (6%)
You have a credible voice.

Use it!
Public Policy Impactful to PEs

- Sales tax on professional services
- Authorization of state and federal certification programs redundant to PE licensees
- Elimination of licensure requirement for critical public sector positions
- Exemptions to licensure requirements for critical industry jobs
Public Policy Impactful to PEs

• Mandatory low cost bid contracting vs. QBS
• Public and private infrastructure standards
• Funding of public infrastructure needs
• Funding of engineering education
Engage in the Public Affairs of Your Community

Have a Voice!
If you’re not at the table you might be on the menu.
Engage in the Public Affairs of Your Community

- Serve on a volunteer board, planning commission, steering committee
- Serve as a technical resource for local agency or NPO
- Participate in public hearings on local ordinances and public policy
- Actively participate in the local Chamber of Commerce, economic development organization, service clubs, builders association, alumni group, PTO, etc.
Engage in the Public Affairs of Your Community

Get Political!
Get Political

Have an effective voice with elected and appointed officials, for the purpose of protecting the public health, safety and welfare, and advancing the profession of Professional Engineering.
Get Political!

• Identify the issues important to you
• Identify where those issues are being addressed and by whom
• Influence the decision makers
• Rinse and Repeat
Influence the Decision Makers

How to generate and spend effectively your own political capital
What is Political Capital?

Why do I want some?
Political Capital

Policy makers listen to those they know, not to those they don’t know.
Earn Your Political Capital

- Become known – Open an Account
- Look for common interests – Make a Deposit
- Make yourself available as a resource - Deposit
- Volunteer – Large Deposit
- Share information that might be useful – Generating Interest
Spend Your Political Capital

Become an Advocate

Ask policy makers for their support
Rules of Engagement
Former KS State Senator David Adkins, CSG President

• All Politics is Local
• Information is King
• Time is of the Essence
• Know the Rules
• Relationships Matter
Communicating with Policy Makers

• Start early to communicate about your issue
• Meetings are most effective
• Phone calls are very effective
• Personal letters still count
• E-Mail and texting have limitations
Communicating with Policy Makers

- Know your facts
- Be fair and reasonable
- Don’t be argumentative or personal
- Don’t overstate your case
- Be passionate but not emotional
- Be timely
- Follow-up
- Show your appreciation
Making the Call

- Identify yourself
- Keep it brief
- Keep it focused
- Ask for a response
When they earn your support give it

- Endorse your candidate
- Host a reception
- Walk your neighborhood
- Write a supportive letter
- Put a candidate sign in your yard
- Volunteer – Do the grunt work
- Tell your friends
- Participate at forums
- Provide financial support
- Register and Vote
Your Role - Leadership

• Model the behavior – Lead by doing
• Organize your chapter and state society
• Build capacity
• Make assignments
• Create expectations
• Build a grassroots database
• Identify priorities
• Develop metrics and score performance
• Advocate for Advocacy
The Ultimate Commitment

Become a candidate and run for office.