The Path to Political Office: Encouraging Involvement in the Political Process
Missouri State Rep. Bart Korman, P.E.
Engineering Public Policy

Advanced Leadership
Bart Korman

- Missouri State Representative
  - Elected in 2010
  - Chairman, Telecommunications Committee
  - Vice Chairman, Transportation Committee
- Professional Engineer
  - PE/PLS for small civil firm in Warrenton, MO
  - Design and manage projects for private and public clients (including water, waste, storm drainage, grading, site plan, and subdivision development)
Informed Opinion

- Having a background in engineering uniquely shapes my perception in policymaking.

- Making the right connections and using industry-specific language helps to clarify issues and frame them in a better context.
Why should I be politically active?

- Public officials want reasonable and unbiased information prior to making decisions.
- Engineers are greatly affected by public policy:
  - Transportation
  - Utilities
  - Environment
  - Public Safety
  - Patents
  - Licensure
Typical Day

• 9 a.m. – Meet with a constituent
  ▫ They made a special trip just to see me, hoping to educate me on an issue that affects them.

• 9:15 a.m. – Breakfast with State Senator
  ▫ Sharing unique knowledge of an area can be helpful in representing our shared constituents.

• 9:45 a.m. – Chat with a lobbyist
  ▫ Knowing they have a bill coming through, this is likely their last chance to catch me before voting.

• 10 a.m. – Morning Session
  ▫ House Members are expected to be in the Chamber, ready to vote on the business for the day.
• 12:30 p.m. – Telecommunications Committee
  ▫ As committee chairman, I have to be ready to lead a hearing and ask the right questions of the witnesses that come forward.

• 12:30 p.m. – Transportation Committee
  ▫ As a bill sponsor, I testify on its behalf in front of the relevant committee. Often, committees meet at the same time, so I have to travel between hearing rooms.

• 2 p.m. – Afternoon Session
  ▫ Especially near the end of our legislative session (January through May), discussion often requires a continuation later in the day.

• 2:30 p.m. – Stakeholder Meeting
  ▫ I work with interested parties on a bill in my committee or that I’m handling on the House floor.
• 4 p.m. – School Tour
  ▫ With field trips to the Capitol being a necessity for Missouri 4th graders, I’ll often get to sit with students from my district and talk about my job.

• 5 p.m. – Utility Infrastructure Committee
  ▫ As a member of the committee, I make sure to study up on the legislation that will be discussed and make the most of my time with more informed members and witnesses.

• 7 p.m. – Evening Session
  ▫ Sometimes going well into the night, Evening Session ensures we finish the agenda items necessary for the day.

• 9 p.m. – Late Dinner
  ▫ After a long legislative day, I still make time to have discussions with colleagues over a last minute meal before heading home to the district.
Balancing Campaign and Public Service

• The ethics standards surrounding a campaign are different from those of public service.

• It’s important to know the rules, the regulating body, and the consequences before engaging in any political activity.
Campaign Ethics

- In Missouri, campaigns report to the Missouri Ethics Commission.
- All dollars and cents must be accounted for in a campaign, and the MEC monitors donor lists.
- Accepting campaign donations should never indicate *quid pro quo*.
- Campaign activity should stop at the Capitol doors. The building serves the public, not the individual legislators.
Public Service Ethics

• The Missouri Ethics Commission is also the regulating body for registered lobbyists and reporting their expenditures.
• Most legislative bodies will have ethics committees responsible for investigating and deliberating member behaviors.
• When in doubt, err on the side of caution and transparency.
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<th><strong>DO</strong></th>
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<td>• <strong>DO</strong> keep up to date on the rules and regulations regarding lobbying.</td>
<td>• <strong>DON’T</strong> attempt to buy or sell votes in exchange for gifts or donations.</td>
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<td>• <strong>DO</strong> establish and develop friendly discussions from both sides of an issue (information is power in decision-making).</td>
<td>• <strong>DON’T</strong> be secretive regarding your connections to certain industries or issues.</td>
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<td>• <strong>DO</strong> know where to ask questions and report your activity.</td>
<td>• <strong>DON’T</strong> put yourself in a no-win situation when it comes to ethics regulation.</td>
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<td>• <strong>DO</strong> protect your office/client by acting in all due propriety.</td>
<td>• <strong>DON’T</strong> be afraid to say, “No, thank you.” When in doubt, it’s best to just say no.</td>
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Communicating with Legislators

- Keep it local.
- Keep it personal.
- Keep it concise.
- Put it in writing.
Keep it local

- State legislators are most concerned about their constituents and the issues that affect them.
- The more specific your information is to their home district, the more likely it is to be effective.
- Take the effort to learn about similar businesses/firms in the area. Applying your information to a real-life example the legislator is familiar with can be incredibly persuasive.
Keep it personal

- State legislators can tell when there is real effort put into any communication. The more effort put forth, the more likely you will receive a response.

- Personal cards, phone calls, and visits are more memorable than form letters that every staff office will receive.
Keep it concise

• Legislator offices are busy environments, and long messages regarding a confusing topic are often too time-consuming. Save the heavy explanations for a follow-up.

• The simpler the original message, the more likely it is to elicit a response. Even better, it can provoke questions that give you an opportunity to elaborate.
Put it in writing

- A written communication provides a readily available record in the office, which can be used later when the legislator has a chance to address the issue.
- After a phone call or in-person meeting, follow up with a brief email summarizing the content of the visit and reiterating your position.
- Always make sure to include your contact information, networking at this level is pertinent.
“But I don’t know anyone.”

• Everyone has to start somewhere.
• Make an appointment with your state representative and state senator.
• Research relevant committees and legislation to your particular issue.
• Be prepared with fact sheets, anecdotes, and district-specific experiences to share.
• When in doubt, ask.
The Takeaway

• Lay the groundwork before issues come up.
• Be knowledgeable about the subject when the issues do come up. Be a resource by offering short, factual, and informative meetings.
• Every minute counts in a legislative day, so appreciate every minute you can catch.
• Be courteous, positive, and politely ask for support.
Questions?

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