

YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE RELATIONSHIPS MATTER



— WQA —
RELATIONSHIP
BUILDING
LEGISLATIVE

My Legislators

My Senators are:

NAME:

OFFICE BUILDING:

ROOM NUMBER:

PHONE NUMBER:

AND

NAME:

OFFICE BUILDING:

ROOM NUMBER:

PHONE NUMBER:

My Representative is:

NAME:

OFFICE BUILDING:

ROOM NUMBER:

PHONE NUMBER:

I live in the:

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:

You are the key to our success

Our political process in America operates on two major principles: information and relationships.

As citizens and businesspeople, we often do not think about turning to elected officials and policymakers until we are in need. This can be a lost opportunity for us, if not an outright mistake. By taking a little time to develop relationships and pass on key information now, we can prepare ourselves and our representatives for the future.

You can make a difference.

Time and again in the past, our industry has faced potential new laws and regulations, and it has only been through the combined efforts of our dedicated membership that we have succeeded.

The purpose of this guidebook is to provide you the basics on effective interaction with policymakers.

If we stand outside the system or do not stand with strength, there will be no one else to promote our interests and the needs and desires of our customers. But, working cooperatively, we can face down difficult threats and push for new opportunities.

Finally, we rely on you. We are constantly monitoring legislation. But when you learn about bills or local ordinances that you think the association should support, please contact WQA so we can work together to find a strategy to promote our industry.

Sincerely,



David C. Haataja
Executive Director
Water Quality Association

Getting to know your legislators

Legislators – your Member of Congress and state representatives – are in the business of meeting people. They expect to sit down regularly with constituents to find out about your concerns and issues.

Legislators pay attention to the issues raised by voters in their communities, especially during an election year. The hometown connection is essential to getting a legislator's attention.

To begin with, be sure you are registered to vote. In any communication, include your name, address, phone number, and email address.

Do a little homework.

Before contacting your legislator, get to know his or her background. You can look up your legislator's name, background, voting record, and committee assignments on the Web. This will help you understand where they stand and where their own areas of interest lie.

Don't forget about staff.

Most state representatives have at least one legislative aide in their local office and may have another in the state capital. Members of Congress have large staffs dedicated to specific issues. Get to know the staff in your legislator's office. They often do the legwork, keep track of constituents, and have considerable influence with the legislator.

Ask for a meeting.

Call your local state legislators and Member of Congress. They are eager to spend some time hearing from constituents, especially business leaders. Ask for an appointment to introduce yourself and to talk about industry issues. You can even suggest the legislator visit your company or plant. Often, a political official will be more than happy to take a tour and notify the local media. It's a great way to put attention on your business while building an important relationship.

Bring local officials into the discussion.

Legislators listen to the wishes of local officials. Don't stop at just meeting your legislators. Mayors, aldermen, and county board members are key influencers in your community.

Talking about our industry and WQA

Legislators are likely to respond most favorably when they know you are both a local constituent, as well as a member of a respected trade association. Whether you are meeting in their office, your place of business, or at a political function, there are a few points you want to stress.

You've probably experienced friends and neighbors who do not fully understand the nature of our business. When many people hear "water treatment," they think of municipal plants or only one particular aspect of our industry.

Our first task is to make sure policymakers understand how we serve the public.

Take advantage of our "leave behinds" and other material that offer more detail. But in talking with legislators, there are a few key points you will want to stress. For example:

- **Buzzwords** – One way to help policy-makers think of you in the future is to suggest they remember your business every time they hear certain buzzwords and phrases in the news or from other constituents. Water contamination, boil orders, well water problems, water treatment, hard water, and more, should all ring a bell.
- We provide "**Final Barrier**" protection for homeowners – systems that will need to be integrated into policymaking in years to come. With people learning more about emerging contaminants and municipal systems stretched to the limit, the kinds of products we provide can offer people peace of mind and protection.
- In addition to health advantages, our products provide **energy savings and environmental benefits**. Through the research foundation of our industry, we have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars documenting these positive effects.
- If you're discussing water softening, make sure to mention that customary softeners are not simply for taste, odor, and aesthetics. As our studies and other testing shows, there are **many benefits** often not considered – including the ability of softeners to reduce the presence of some common contaminants.
- Talk about your local business: How many people are employed there? How much do you add to the economy? How many local residents go through your doors?
- The Water Quality Association is an **independent and not-for-profit** trade association. WQA is a credible resource for information that legislators and their staff should be encouraged to exploit. We have thousands of members nationwide, including major corporations, as well as family-owned businesses.

- Through the **Gold Seal** Program, we are committed to independent testing that gives consumers the confidence to know they are getting what they pay for. Like the UL mark, our industry has a method to raise standards and serve the public. Through professional **training and certification**, we also offer high-level and ethical service.
- Talk about larger business issues that are important to you. Make sure your representative knows that you support job-friendly policies and pro-growth legislation.

Some tips for talking with legislators

If you're in your state's capital or Washington DC, don't hesitate to set up a meeting when the legislature is in session. Elected officials expect visits from their "bosses." And when the legislature is not in session, a visit to the home office will be less hectic. Here are some suggestions for your visit:

- When you call the office to set up a meeting, identify yourself as a constituent and a local businessperson.
- Go with a group of employees or even other business people. This will make the visit less stressful and increase your strength.
- Talk about the size of your business, how many employees you have, and so forth.

- Know our issue(s) and suggestions for solutions. Prepare to be brief and to the point. Often you can expect about 15 minutes for a meeting, especially for a Congressional visit.
- Don't overload a visit with too many issues. Focus on one or two. An explanation of Final Barrier may be the best way to get started.
- Close on a positive note. Thank them for their time. Restate the issue and your suggestions. Be specific about what you want them to do.
- Regardless of the outcome, always send a thank you letter.

Another great way to interact with legislators is by attending a candidate forum, especially during an election year, or going to events they will be attending. At forums, you should feel free to ask questions. Then talk with your legislator after the forum and personalize your contact.

At times, WQA or your local association may contact you about specific issues. We will provide talking points and discuss a strategy for interaction with you. This is the time where the groundwork you have done beforehand will be crucial.

Feedback

After any legislative contact, we want to hear how it went. This will help us understand where key legislators stand. Please fill out the feedback sheet and send it in to us.

Writing to legislators

Personal contact with legislators lays the groundwork for a relationship. At times, especially when a specific piece of legislation is under consideration, a letter or email will be critical. Legislators respond, particularly to constituents who take the time to commit their views and positions to writing.

WQA or your local association may ask you to write about a specific issue, or you may know of a concern yourself. Here are some general points on writing to legislators:

- Write your email or letter as an individual first and foremost. You will want to refer to your association membership, too, but it is most important they know you are a voter and local business leader.
- Email or write your letter as soon as possible when an issue appears. Legislation can move quickly and legislators will be keeping track of who is for and against a bill.
- Keep your email or letter brief and to the point. An email should be a paragraph or two, and letters should be no more than one page.
- Make sure you explain that you are a businessperson in your community.
- Give a bill number if you have one.
- Open your email or letter by clearly stating your position in the first paragraph. Follow up by giving reasons why the legislator should support your position.
- Personalize your email or letter. Let the legislator know how the legislation will affect you and the customers you serve.
- Always put your return address in the email or letter. You can use either your home or office address. If either is in the legislator's district, then use that as the return address.
- Always ask the legislator to email or write back to you with their position on the legislation you are contacting them about.

Sample letter requesting support

Janice Roberts
Roberts Water Conditioning
Laketown, Wisconsin 54384

Congressman Ryan Biddleman
16 E. Shirewood Lane
Pillington, Wisconsin 51234

Dear Congressman Biddleman:

As a local resident, businessowner, and member of the trade association that stands up for water treatment to protect families, thank you for your support for job growth and public health and safety. As you probably recall, we met when you visited my company two years ago. It was a great privilege and honor for myself and our employees.

My company, Roberts Water Conditioning, has been in business in our community since 1945. We employ 23 local residents and serve thousands of customers every year, providing treatment devices and service to make sure the water in our homes is clean and healthy.

As you probably know, the legislature is currently considering a bill (SB734) that would ensure that water treatment professionals going into people's homes have been trained to do their job in an ethical and effective manner. I have gone through such training myself, through the Water Quality Association, of which I am also a member. It has helped keep me on top of industry technology and given me knowledge I could not have gotten anywhere else.

WQA is a respected not-for-profit trade association. For decades, it has been a credible resource for information for policymakers. We have thousands of members nationwide, including major corporations as well as family-owned businesses. These members have invested countless hours going through high-quality training to better serve the public. With SB734, consumers will be protected and best business practices will be promoted.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Respectfully,

Janice Roberts

Cc: Water Quality Association, Wisconsin Water Quality Association

WQRF | Water Quality Research Foundation

Email: wqrf@wqa.org

WQRF funds independent scientific research on subjects relating to water quality improvement. Its goal is to advance the science of water to improve the quality of life, and to ensure that the values of the water treatment industry are presented clearly and accurately. WQRF studies have shown the advantages of water treatment, such as environmental benefits and energy savings.



Email: goldseal@wqa.org

The Water Quality Association's Gold Seal Certification Program is dedicated to providing public health and safety services, maintaining expert service, superior reputation, and fair pricing. The Gold Seal Program offers rigorous independent testing and certification of all products and chemicals that contact drinking water.



Email: info@wqa.org

WQA is a not-for-profit international trade organization representing the residential, commercial, and industrial water treatment industry. WQA is a resource and information center, a voice for the industry, an educator of professionals, a laboratory for product testing, and a communicator with the public.

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A not-for-profit organization