

Developing a Healthy Relationship with Your Legislators

Jeff Mayes

September 2026

Government: Looking Through a New “Lens”

- Age-old public perceptions
- Reactive business
- Most issues not partisan
- Interactive “sport”
- Designed to be inefficient/parochial
- Things rarely happen for one reason
- Impossible to be an expert in all things
- Not exactly like private business



Job of a Legislator

- Dynamic job description
- Performance review is election day
- Jack/Jill of all trades
 - Decision maker: Vote on rules/laws
 - Policymaker: Legislation
 - Negotiator: Solve problems
 - Constituent ombudsman
 - Media/public affairs spokesperson
 - Candidate
 - Human being



U.S. Congresswoman Brenda Lawrence



Making a Decision

- Personal Opinion
- Majority rule
- Constituent groups
- Lobbyists
- Political party
- Peers
- Political leadership
- Bureaucracy

Communicating

- Get to know legislators BEFORE you need something
- Reintroduce yourself
 - Eliminates awkwardness
 - Avoid “Do you remember my name?”
- Personal communication is best
 - Form letter form response
- Stay connected
- Limit reading material
- Respect their time and situation



The Power and Potential of Staff



- Don't underestimate
- Get to know and include them
- Control access
- Influence
- Share insights on the process and your issue
- Staffers may ascend to larger roles or elective office

Make an Impact, Have Influence

- Ask questions, share concerns
- Be yourself
- Stick to what you know, know what you want
- Less is more, simple is best
- Don't demand; be a resource
- Don't let perfect be the enemy of good
- You win some, you lose some
- Say "thank you" and share credit



Economic Developers' Legislative Strategy

**Build
Relationships**

**Engage &
Educate**

**Say
“Thank You”**

Share Credit



Final Thoughts

- Building trust takes time
- Relationships are vital BUT not encouraged
- Founding fathers and today's media
- Franklin, Adams, the enemy, sharing a bed and evil spirits

Thank You

