



# Information Resource

## Vice President Government Relations

## VP Government Relations: Position Description Introduction

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**Welcome**

Thank you for taking on the role of VP Government Relations. To ensure that the National Kitchen & Bath Association Continues to meet the needs of kitchen and bath professionals, the NKBA encourages our members to serve as officers in their local NKBA chapters.

The purpose of this document is to set the expectations and responsibilities of your role for a calendar year. Please review the information and direct any questions to the Regions and Chapter Department at [Chapters@nkba.org](mailto:Chapters@nkba.org)

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## Grassroots Advocacy Role Descriptions

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Communication is the key responsibility of the Vice President of Government Relations. As federal, state or provincial and local bills concerning the kitchen and bath industry increase, our members must be kept aware of which laws may affect them as well as the actions they can take to prevent those laws from negatively affecting their business growth and function.

In those Chapters covering multiple states, it may be necessary to appoint an assistant located in each of the states. The VP – Government Relations is eligible for reelection to unlimited one-year terms.

VP-Government Relations should understand how legislation affects the kitchen and bathroom industry in the state or provinces including:

- Basic information about state/provincial government and how laws are passed
- Basic information on how codes/standards affect the industry
- The political environment in which the kitchen and bathroom industry operates
- NKBA's role in the political environment including NKBA's Strategic Plan and Legislative Policy

The VP-Government Relations serves as the communications link between Chapter members and the NKBA by:

Representing the chapter or the Association at Coalition meetings or other meetings as necessary

- Keeping members aware of legislative activity as well as the positions taken by the NKBA
- Assisting NKBA with data collection when information affecting that Chapter is required
- Assisting NKBA with mobilizing a grassroots campaign to communicate with legislators as required

Reports to members will be based on information supplied by the Association or its contracted monitoring group, and will include status of bills being considered by the legislative committee

- Serves as liaison (or appoints Chapter member) between Chapter and local, state, and federal elected officials
- Perform other duties assigned by the Chapter President or Chapter Executive Committee
- Assist outgoing VP – Government Relations
- Become familiar with the issues facing the industry

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Become acquainted with the State/Provincial Legislators

- Stays informed by reading/understanding NKBA's Legislative page contained on the website – [www.nkba.org](http://www.nkba.org) and our legislative website – [www.capwiz.com/nkba](http://www.capwiz.com/nkba).

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## Who Is Best Suited To Be VP Government Relations?

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### **Description**

Do you still remember the 7<sup>th</sup> grade civics lecture on “how a bill becomes a law?” Do you watch CNN and/or C-SPAN? Do you like crossword puzzles? Do you have the desire to get involved in political coalitions? If so, then consider serving as the VP–Government Relations for your chapter. There are many challenges to the industry and if you find this as a challenge rather than a threat AND if you are comfortable debating issues, then this is for you! The most time-consuming part of this job occurs during your state's legislative session (typically January through May and perhaps again in the fall).

Communication is the key responsibility of the VP-Government Relations. As Federal, State or Provincial and Local bills concerning the kitchen and bathroom industry increase, it is essential to the well-being of the members that they, and NKBA, are kept informed. This task can most effectively be carried out through the team efforts of NKBA staff and chapter members.

Members must be kept aware of which laws may affect them as well as the actions they can take to prevent those laws from negatively affecting their business growth and function.

Don't worry; NKBA has brought our long-time legal counsel, Ed Nagorsky, in house as full-time Director of Legislative Affairs, so you will have plenty of assistance and support from Headquarters.

## Procedural Checklist

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<b>Procedures</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
1. Present reports at Executive Committee Meetings and Chapter Meetings	Ongoing
2. Provide articles for Chapter Newsletters send article to the VP Communication	Seven weeks prior to any chapter meeting
3. Provide any information that needs to be included in the chapter meeting notice mailing to the VP Programs	Seven weeks prior to the meeting date: VP Programs should be informed in advance of any such mailings
4. Establish good communications by networking with local and state legislative groups	Ongoing
5. Communicate regularly with our General Counsel and Director of Legislative Affairs about legal and legislative issues	Ongoing

There are a variety of grassroots activities that are required for us to have an efficient, dynamic grassroots program. Each Chapter member can engage in the activities best suited to his or her time, talents and availability.

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## Why Grassroots

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The development of the NKBA's member benefits, programs and activities are guided by the Association's strategic plan. It's updated every three years by the Board of Directors. Goal IV is Advocacy: "Public policy and legislation affecting the kitchen and bath industry will be positively influenced through NKBA's leadership role in monitoring and affecting industry issues."

One of the reasons the NKBA is placing greater focus on advocacy is because, quite simply, it works! There has been an abundance of research with actual legislators across the country that shows they rank constituent (the people that live and vote in their district) contact as the most influential type of input they receive. This input is often referred to as "grassroots."

The Gallup Organization asked congressional staffers what most influences their boss. Their replies:

Letters from constituents	78%
Phone calls from constituents	12%
Other	10%

Thus, if we want to have a voice in impacting public policy that impacts our industry, we must all get involved. The National Kitchen & Bath Association is not just placing a great emphasis on grassroots advocacy, but also giving chapters the tools to be effective advocates. The goal is simple: To ensure that elected officials know where our industry stands on issues that are vital to our profession, our customers, and our employees.

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## Why Grassroots- Continued

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There has even been research that proves that grassroots (you, the voter) is the most effective way for organizations to impact the legislative process. Professor Michael Lord of Wake Forest University asked the following question of congressional staff members in 1998:

“What are the most effective ways companies can impact federal legislation?”

Grassroots	57%
Lobbying by Executives	27%
Other	16%

Thus, we *can* have an impact on the legislative decisions that ultimately impact our profession and our customers.

“Grassroots advocacy” simply refers to activity and decision outside the traditional focus of decision-making authority. In other words, it means our activities as kitchen and bath design professionals impact our elected representatives in the state capitols and Washington, D.C.

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## Key Grassroots Advocacy Elements

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Here are a few key elements of successful grassroots advocacy:

People - While one person can place attention on a legislative issue, it takes more than one person to influence a lawmaker's vote. Your chapter members are all constituents of legislators, and thus have influence with them. One influential person does not equal an effective grassroots advocacy program. However, those "VIP's" (Very Influential People) can help focus the legislator's attention and provide access for further communications.

Events – To maintain program momentum, we need to make sure our members (the people above) have the opportunity to interact with legislators at Chapter meetings, are encouraged to invite legislators to visit their workplaces, and to attend meetings in the district where legislators are speaking.

Communications – In addition to articles in Profiles, we need to communicate with our members about the latest legislative issues impacting our profession and how they can communicate their concerns to legislators. We have developed a Legislative Section on our NKBA website (found under the Industry Center heading) and have a dedicated legislative website which enables our members to be alerted to upcoming legislative issues, access their legislators and create and send emails and faxes to their representatives. One of the most important grassroots communications is our "Action Alert" emails

Action Alerts – Since we cannot predict the timing of key legislative decisions, "Action Alerts" are a way for us to quickly notify members of legislation that will soon be acted upon by state or federal legislators. Any legislation with an "Action Alert" notification means that we need to contact our legislators on that issue as soon as possible, preferably the same day that the Action Alert is received.

Tips on how to integrate these key components will be featured throughout this manual.

# Key Advocate

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**Purpose** The role of a National Kitchen & Bath Association Key Advocate is twofold:

1) if one has an existing, trusting relationship with an elected official, to maintain that relationship, and/or 2) to work on developing such a relationship. There is an abundance of research that documents lawmakers view personal friends and community leaders as the most influential types of constituents, only behind their family members. Thus, for the NKBA to realize its public policy goals, active Key Advocates must be a part of our overall legislative strategy. We cannot accomplish our legislative goals without dedicated volunteers who are willing to maintain lawmaker relationships all year, not just when we need a legislator to vote with us.

**Qualifications** The successful Key Advocate will have the following skills, attitudes, and talents:

- Willingness to stay in touch with a legislator even when there are no Pressing issues
- Ability to articulate NKBA public policy positions, emphasizing your personal story relative to such positions
- Ability to disagree agreeably; maintain a desire to have a working relationship regardless of potential disagreements with the legislator, provide feedback to appropriate NKBA advocacy staff on any lawmaker interactions where NKBA issues are discussed

**Suggested Activities**

The main goal of a Key Advocate should be to maintain interaction with the lawmaker all year. This is not unlike how you network or socialize with other business associates or friends. Find ways to keep in front of the lawmaker, whether through sending newspaper clippings of interest, birthday cards, volunteering for their campaign, etc. It is important that you are in contact with your lawmaker even when you don't need anything from him

## Key Advocate- Continued

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**Results** The results of positive Key Advocate working relationships are the following:

- Greater legislator understanding of NKBA issues
- Ready access to lawmaker on urgent issues and concerns
- Greater likelihood that lawmaker will vote with the NKBA position
- Increased trust between legislator and the NKBA
- Enhanced NKBA brand reputation

**Measurement**

Measuring an intangible, such as a credible, quality relationship, is difficult. However, we do know the impact of a negative relationship with a lawmaker. For example, if just one well-meaning NKBA advocate has a negative interaction with an elected official, that official will tell their colleagues about it, thereby affecting the National Kitchen & Bath Association's brand. It can take months and years to overcome such negative perceptions.

In the case of lawmaker relationships, one bad interaction can indeed "ruin it for everyone." The greatest measurement of success for any Key Advocate is whether you have continued access and interaction with your lawmaker. The public policy process is one of compromise. An individual Key Advocate is not responsible for the outcome of every bill they discuss with their lawmaker. The purpose of a Key Advocate is to always have a trusted, open line of communication with their lawmaker.

**NKBA  
Guidance**

Mentors may be available to new Key Advocates. Please notify NKBA staff and we will do our best to connect you with an experienced Key Advocate.

The NKBA staff will provide issue briefing materials and suggested activities that you can engage in to build a positive working relationship with your lawmaker

# Letter Writer

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**Purpose** Elected officials read constituent mail; they are absolutely influenced by the letters they receive from the voters. Letter writing is one of the most basic, yet powerful advocacy activities in which you can engage.

**Suggested Activities**

Add your lawmaker to the chapter's prospect list so they receive Chapter mailings.

There will be times when you will receive an urgent request from us to write a letter to your lawmaker on a specific issue. We heavily rely on our Letter Writers to follow through and write at these times.

We encourage you to write letters to your lawmakers at any time, because letter writing is not limited to asking your lawmaker to vote "yes" or "no" on a piece of legislation. Consider the following:

- Write a note of congratulations to your legislator when legislation he or she sponsored is enacted into law
- Write a thank you note to the legislator when you read or hear of their support of an NKBA initiative
- Write them before an NKBA-sponsored bill or opposition to another bill is about to be introduced—this creates momentum for or against the bill

**Measurement**

We attempt to keep track of the number of letters sent to lawmakers. Therefore, it is important to send or fax a copy of your letters to NKBA advocacy staff, or notify us that you contacted your legislator.

Ultimately, the measurement of our success is whether targeted legislators voted with us. However, we also measure our progress by reviewing our letter writing over several years. For example, if we know that twice the number of NKBA Letter Writers wrote their lawmaker on the same issue than in previous years, we consider that progress.

## Letter Writer- Continued

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**NKBA  
Guidance**

The NKBA staff will always provide talking points and the background on an issue before asking you to write your legislator. We are also “on call” to answer questions as you are writing your letter.

**Benefits**

The benefits of serving as a Letter Writer include:

- Knowledge that you are helping our members and your customers through the public policy process
  - Knowledge that you were engaged in the fight, rather than sitting on the sidelines
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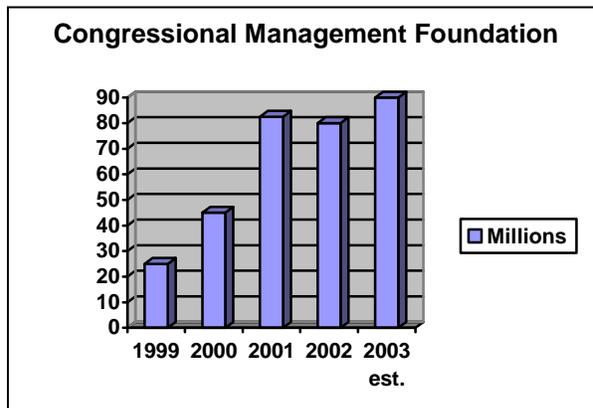
## The Rules for Effective Legislative Communications

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Legislators need and want to hear from their constituents. They can't get re-elected unless they satisfy more than 50% of the voters on Election Day, and to do that, they have to listen to their constituents.

However, we aren't the only ones who want to communicate with our legislators. On the federal level, email communications to Members of Congress has multiplied.

Consider the following:



This chart translates to:  
1999: 206 emails per day  
2003: 909 emails per day

We can safely assume that the influx of email is also occurring in the state legislatures as well.

Thus, our communications must be credible to be noticed. The following tips will help you more quickly and effectively communicate with your elected officials.

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## The Rules for Effective Legislative Communications- Continued

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While we urge you to communicate in the way you are most comfortable, research does show that certain forms of communication are more influential than others. The research below was conducted with state legislators across the country.

### What Is the Most Influential Type of Communication?

- Constituent Meeting
- Constituent Phone Call
- Constituent Letters – (personal, non- form)
- Fax

Please note however, that the anthrax scare in 2001, when letters containing [anthrax spores](#) were mailed to several news media offices and two [Democratic U.S. Senators](#), killing five people and infecting 17 others, has effected the preferred method of delivery to legislators. Now, more often than not, faxes and emails are the recommended method of written communication, however letters are still valuable. NKBA's legislative website makes it easy for our members to send emails and faxes to their state representatives with just a few clicks of the mouse.

The Congressional Management Foundation's research also found the following:

“Grassroots Worst Practices” that all NKBA Chapters should avoid:

- Directing a campaign to a specific staffer
  - Misrepresenting a Member's position
  - Sending a negative campaign to Members who support the issue or legislation
  - Sending gimmicks
  - Patching through phone calls without coaching callers
  - Generating campaigns from lists, rather than constituent action
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## Do Your Homework

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You'll feel more comfortable about corresponding with your legislators if you know a little bit about their legislative and professional careers, their legislative priorities, etc.

The legislative process is centered on relationships. Fair or unfair, certain voters get more attention from elected officials than others. Why is this? Because lawmakers are like you and me. They trust people with whom they have existing relationships. That trust enables them to provide more access, time, and non-judgmental listening to those they trust, in contrast to other constituents with whom they don't have such relationships.

So how do you build a working relationship with someone you do not know? It's not too different from how you approach potential clients. You have to do your homework to uncover areas of authentic common interests and attitudes that may facilitate a rapport. The key is to do this when you have no particular issue on which to lobby the legislator.

Go to the lawmaker's website. If you do not have the website address, go to any search engine and type in the lawmaker's name and title (For example, Senator John Doe, Representative Susan Jones, etc.). Click on the "biography" link. Bookmark this on your computer, or print it out and keep it in a file. Then take time to read the biography. This will give you a myriad of clues as to the lawmaker's interests, aspirations, and achievements. It will provide clues to what you may have in common with the legislator. For example, look for the following to see what you may have in common with your lawmaker:

- Where did they attend college?
- What hometown are they from?
- What does their spouse do for a living?

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## Do Your Homework- Continued

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On what other community organizations do they serve? Do you also volunteer with those same organizations, or do you have a friend or colleague who does

How many children do they have? Are their children the same age as yours?

If they are not a full-time legislator, what is his profession? Are you in the same profession, or do you know a relative or friend who practices the same profession, or who works in that industry?

Did they serve in the military? Did you serve in the same branch of the military?

Once you ferret out similar experiences (and you will), make a mental note of them and when appropriate, refer to them or ask your legislator about them. You'll find it's much easier to talk with them about non-legislative subjects. This will eventually relax you the next time you have to ask them for their time, listening ear, or vote.

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## In Writing

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The letter is a direct way to communicate with a state legislative office.  
When writing a letter, this list of suggestions will improve its effectiveness:

The letter is a direct way to communicate with a state legislative office.  
When writing a letter, this list of suggestions will improve its effectiveness:

Type your name, address, and phone number at the top of the letter, not just the envelope. Envelopes are often thrown away before a letter is answered.

Most state legislatures are only in session part of the year; some meet every two years. This information may be found on you state's legislative website. When the legislature is out of session, it may be more effective to send your letter to your legislator's district office.

Address the envelope and inside address as follows:

To a State Senator:

The Honorable (Full Name)  
Main Capitol Building, (Room Number)  
Pennsylvania State Senate  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

To a State House of Representative:

The Honorable (Full Name)  
Main Capitol Building, (Room Number)  
Pennsylvania House of Representatives  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Identify yourself as a constituent right away. If you are writing as an office-holder of NKBA, say so.

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## In Writing- Continued

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Be specific. Your purpose for writing should be stated in the first paragraph of the letter. In the first paragraph, state the bill number and a brief description of the legislation about which you are writing. Sometimes several bills are introduced that deal with the same subject matter. Also, state what position you want the legislator to take, for example, “I am asking you to vote “yes” on the bill number referred to in the first paragraph, e.g. House Bill: HB\_\_\_\_\_, Senate Bill: SB\_\_\_\_\_. Try to send your letter while the issue is still alive.

- State your position. Explain why you support or oppose this particular issue. Keep in mind that local examples concerning the impact of this legislation are very powerful. Be courteous and to the point, keeping your letter focused on one issue.
- Get personal – explain how a bill would affect you, your family, or your job.
- Ask for a response. Indicate to your legislator that you would appreciate a reply containing his/her position on the issue. "Sincerely yours" is a proper way to conclude your letter.
- Arguments that can't be substantiated are dismissed. Be sure of your facts, but don't overload the letter with them. Facts validate your letter and illustrate that you have given thought to your position. NKBA will give you “talking points” to use when contacting legislators.
- Don't ask for the impossible. Don't tell a legislator to vote your way “or else.” Do be firm, confident, positive and courteous.
- Follow up. If you agree with your legislator's vote, take the time to let him/her know that. If your legislator's vote on the bill pleases you, **express your thanks**. Elected officials appreciate complimentary letters and rarely receive gratitude from those they represent. Similarly, if you disagree with his or her vote, let him know.

## By Phone

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To find your state legislator's phone number, you can go to your state's legislative website and search for your representative's number. You can also search for your representative by searching his name in popular search engines such as Google.

Keep in mind that most state legislatures are only in session part-time, so try to get the number for your legislator's district office. Telephone calls are often taken by a staff member and not the actual legislative member. Ask to speak with the aide who handles the issue to which you wish to comment. If they are not available, you may also leave a message. If you speak with someone other than your legislator, take down their name and title.

Upon reaching your state legislator on the phone, it's easiest to follow these four basic steps:

- **IDENTIFY** yourself by name and the organization (if any) that you represent or the town from which you are calling.
- **REQUEST** a written response to your phone call if you did not speak to your legislative member. If the legislator requires further information, provide it as soon as possible.
- **THANK** the person who took the phone call for their time and consideration.

When calling a legislator's office to express your support or opposition to legislation, it is important to identify yourself as a constituent immediately. For example, "Hello, my name is Jane Doe and I'm a registered voter in Representative Smith's district."

State the issue that you are calling about and whether you want them to vote "YES" or "NO" on the proposal. Be prepared to give one or two supporting examples of why they should vote accordingly

Provide your home address and ask for a written response.

Ask the staff for their name and thank them for their time. Remember their name for the next time you make a call.

## By E-Mail

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Send your e-mail to your elected representative/senator only. As with written communications, it is appropriate to send a copy of your e-mail to pertinent legislative leaders who also need to know the overall grassroots opposition or support of a particular bill, such as the Governor or Committee Chair.

- Do not, however, “spam” the entire legislative body with your email. It irritates legislators and their staff to have to process email from those not in their districts. Legislators do talk to their colleagues about their mail, constituent input, etc. We don’t want to have a reputation as a group who disregards basic legislative communications protocol.
- In the first paragraph of your e-mail, identify that you are a constituent of the lawmaker, your affiliation, and the issue or bill number you are writing about. Include your U.S. postal address, as many legislators still respond to e-mail via the postal service.
- The same rules for letters, phone, and personal communications apply—do not use a threatening tone, state your opposition or support of the bill in your opening, and “ask for the order.” Let them know you will follow up with them to determine how they will vote on the bill.

## The Meeting

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Regardless of whether you communicate in person, via phone or email, here's what research (Showalter, 1997) reveals are the "ultimate rules:"

- Be Brief – 50%  
If you had 2 minutes, what would you say?
  - Know Your Facts – 28%  
What's the other side saying? Steal thunder.
  - Be a source of trusted authority!
  - Get Personal – 19%  
What is the impetus for your involvement?  
What's the best thing about your cause?  
What's the best thing about the best thing?  
What keeps you motivated on this issue?
  - Be Polite – 14%
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## Sample Letter/Email Format

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Whether sending a letter or email, use the following format to state your points. For purposes of this manual, we have demonstrated this in a letter format.

The Honorable (*Full Name*)  
Main Capitol Building, (*Room Number*)  
Pennsylvania State Senate  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Re (*bill number*)

Dear Representative/Senator (last name):

I am writing to urge you to (not) support (*bill number*), the bill to (*describe what the bill does here*).

I am writing as a member of the National Kitchen & Bath Association and as one of your constituents.

There are several reasons why I am urging you to (not) support (*bill number*). First, (you can list as many as three reasons why you support or oppose the legislation. However, keep the letter to one page).

In conclusion, I urge you to (*state whether you want the legislator to vote for or against the legislation*) and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,  
John Q. Citizen

## Organizing a State Chapter Grassroots Advocacy Team

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One Chapter member cannot do it alone – it takes numerous committed NKBA members to build relationships with legislators, which in turn helps move your public policy issues. You may not know it now, but many of your fellow chapter members may have existing relationships with legislators, or know some well enough that they are comfortable making contact with them. Nevertheless, your advocacy effort must be organized and strategic. Here are some basic guidelines to get you started:

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## Organizational Meeting

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By determining the interest and experience levels of your fellow chapter members you will be able to determine your true capabilities and develop a strategy based on your strengths.

At this meeting, you should:

- Identify members who have an established relationship with the lawmaker -- either through personal friendship, connection through professional, civic, religious or community groups, or a political relationship through campaign contributions or activities.
  - Identify those who have experience in politics at the local, state or federal level.
  - Determine who has contacts with other interested constituent groups that might help your efforts
  - Establish a communications network. Whether your advocacy team only meets in conjunction with your regular chapter meetings or more frequently, it is critically important that you establish an effective means of communicating with each other
  - Obtain current information from team members that includes mailing address, preferred emailing address and telephone
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## Strategic Grassroots Goals

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The ultimate goal is to impact legislation which affects your Chapter members. The most effective way to do this is to strengthen the relationship you have with elected officials at all levels. Some suggested grassroots advocacy goals for Chapters include:

- Meet at least once a year with key state representatives, senators and members of congress as a team to discuss issues, provide issue expertise to the elected official, etc.
- Respond promptly to action calls by either emailing, calling or writing your member of congress and/or state legislator.
- Have each of the above legislators also address a state chapter meeting.
- Engage in at least one additional grassroots activity such as attending a town hall meeting, a local or state chamber breakfast event with area legislators, or attending a political fundraiser. Participating in these activities is critical because it allows you to be recognized by your legislator and develop a relationship when you do not need his or her vote. In politics, it is too late to make a friend when you need one.

An advocacy report should be given at each Chapter meeting. These reports can include your upcoming issues that need attention from NKBA members, the status of various political races in your area, especially if those races involve a legislator who has been supportive of your issues; and the results of any recently enacted legislation that may impact the kitchen and bath design profession.

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## Prioritizing Your Legislator “Targets”

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There are a myriad of legislators who represent Chapter members. You will need to prioritize which legislators on which to focus your efforts. The advocacy team should meet and discuss the following issues:

- Which lawmakers serve on committees important to the kitchen and bath design profession?
  - Do these lawmakers understand issues important to your profession or do they need to be educated about your issues?
  - How supportive has the legislator been on your issues in the past?
  - Is the lawmaker generally accessible to discuss issues of importance?
  - How likely is the legislator to be reelected? Is he or she an invulnerable incumbent, an entrenched veteran, or a “lame duck”, ready to retire?
  - Are any of these legislators above in positions of legislature leadership (Speaker of the House, Senate, Senate, President, etc.)?
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## How to Recruit Grassroots Advocates

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The most effective way that you will gain quality grassroots advocates is through other satisfied advocates. There is no better method of recruitment. However, it does take time and results trickle in, rather than receiving lots of “warm bodies.” *This is why you must have an ongoing recruitment plan throughout the year.*

There are many ways that you can recruit potential NKBA advocates:

- Remember that everything you do is part of recruitment. Mention your advocacy initiatives in all forms of communications: brochures, emails, and chapter meetings, even in presentations to community groups
- Consider recruiting your members’ **clients and families**. Ask if you can add them to your email Action Alert notification list.
- Consider inviting clients and friends to Chapter meetings and/or to advocacy team meetings.
- Give new recruits the interest inventory. Forward information to the Director of Professional Programs.

## Opportunities to Gain Visibility with Legislators

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One of the strategic goals for the NKBA is to build our advocacy capabilities. Building relationships with our elected officials is a vital component of this goal, because the legislative process is centered on relationships. Inviting elected officials to address chapter meetings is just one of over a hundred ways to start building a relationship.

Today members of Congress and state legislators must keep track of hundreds of issues. To make sound public policy decisions, they want to learn more about the issues that impact their constituents. Every NKBA member is a legislator's constituent, so lawmakers want to hear what we have to say. This type of interaction serves valuable purposes for your chapter, the NKBA and the legislator.

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## Chapter Meetings

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### **The Value to the Your Chapter and the NKBA**

First, it demonstrates to the legislator that the NKBA is an organized entity with interested, active members. Research (Showalter, 1997) has revealed that lawmakers view advocacy groups who are “organized” as more influential and effective than those who may be greater in number, but without a focus and plan. Our regular chapter meetings are a reminder to our lawmakers that we indeed have a voice.

One of the uniform responses heard from constituents who have met a lawmaker is “I didn’t know he or she was so nice, normal, did not breathe fire as reported, etc.” Helping to “humanize” legislators beyond their roles as policymakers is an effective advocacy motivational tool.

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## The Value to State and Federal Legislators

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Pure and simple, lawmakers want access to voters. NKBA members represent voters. Considering that the average voter turnout in a congressional (non-Presidential) election year is between 33 and 38 percent, very few people vote. Thus, lawmakers want access to people in communities who are active, engaged, and frankly, influential.

Research tells us that people who are members of organizations are considered by marketers, politicians, and researchers as more influential than citizens who are not as involved. Legislators gravitate like Donald Trump to publicity to influential people. Why? They know that they talk to others and share opinions, insights, and, according to the research, are intrepid about telling others how to vote. Valuable, indeed.

Since lawmakers cope with trying to understand more issues than ever, having a resource like NKBA members who truly understand the ramifications of certain laws and regulations is appreciated.

Legislators do not like surprises. If they can meet with us in an informal setting, rather than a pressure filled environment the day before a vote is being taken on one of our issues, they will be more amenable to our point of view.

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## Preparing for the Visit

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To make the visit as seamless as possible, you need to prepare materials for the lawmaker and his or her staff.

Send the following information or provide links in an email to the following:

- The NKBA mission and your Chapter's mission
- Public policy goals of the NKBA/your Chapter
- Who will be in attendance at the meeting
- Specific information on the achievements, rewards recognition, copies of NKBA publications (Better Homes & Garden Special Interest and Profiles), etc. received by one of your Chapter members.

Lawmakers know that a customized speech will help them develop more rapport with their audience, but they simply do not have the resources to find this information independently. They will appreciate your extra attention to making their remarks meaningful.

- Explicit directions to your meeting location, including parking directions and any necessary security procedures upon entering the building
  - Read the legislator's biography and prepare the introduction
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## At the Meeting

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- Arrange for a member to greet the legislator at the building entrance and escort them to the meeting room.
  - Inform them of the rest room location
  - Offer a beverage
  - Depending on the size of the meeting, ask the members to introduce themselves and tell what part of the state they are from. Legislators like to know who is in their audience.
  - When introducing the legislator, since you have already read the legislator's biography, you will know if there is something that they might have in common with NKBA members as a whole or even a few individual members, if so, mention this during the introduction. It eases tension and helps humanize the legislator to our members
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## Post Meeting Follow Up

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- Send a formal letter of appreciation to the member no later than the next day.
  - If you had pictures taken, include those with the letter.
  - If the legislator or their staff asked questions that were not able to be answered during the visit, include these answers in your letter or indicate that you will provide them within a few days.
  - Call the member's office to ensure that the materials were received and all questions answered.
  - Complete the legislator meeting feedback form and fax or email to VP Professional Programs.
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## **“Town Hall” Meetings**

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Town hall meetings are another opportunity to meet your legislator. Virtually every lawmaker holds meetings in the community during congressional or state legislative recesses. Sometimes these meetings are referred to as “town meetings”, “coffee klatches” and “meet and greets.” Whatever they are called in your area, they are an excellent opportunity for face-to-face contact with your lawmaker.

You don’t have to ask for their vote on an NKBA issue at a town meeting. This is simply a time to remind them of the industry that you represent and that you and the industry care about issues affecting the lawmaker’s district.

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## **Town Hall Meeting Basics**

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Call the legislators office, or check their web site to find out upcoming dates and locations of public appearances.

Mark your calendar, and notify other NKBA members of this opportunity.

Arrive 15 minutes early and do the following:

- Get a seat in the first couple rows. Speakers make most of their eye contact with people in the front rows
- Greet the lawmaker without the throng of people who usually greet them after the meeting
- Greet the lawmaker’s staff in attendance

## After the Meeting

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If you didn't get to greet the lawmaker before the meeting, make every attempt to do so after the meeting. Just say, "Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm an NKBA member who is active with the \_\_\_\_\_ chapter. I resonated with your remarks about \_\_\_\_\_."

- The lawmaker will be pressed for time after the meeting. This is not a time to get into philosophical discussions.
  - Write the lawmaker a quick note to tell him he did a good job. If you met any of your legislator's staff, write them a note also.
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## The NKBA Action Alert Process

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The ultimate goal of the NKBA’s advocacy program is to affect legislation that can impact the livelihood and operations of NKBA members. While much of the success of a grassroots mobilization is dependent on previous education and awareness efforts, it all comes down to the action—getting people to write, call or meet with their elected officials.

The key to successful activations is a system to communicate with your members so that there is less confusion and chaos when it’s time to quickly contact legislators. Based on grassroots advocacy “best practices,” the following are guidelines for a successful Action Alert execution

### Timing

A critical aspect of the activation process is the timing. Most Action Alerts require immediate action, but some may allow a few days for a response. The NKBA will do its best to provide realistic response time frames. If you have an organized mobilization system in place, it will be less chaotic to activate your members.

The NKBA will send you the Action Alert via email and/or fax. You are urged to customize the piece to reflect how the proposal will impact your employees and customers.

- Determine which legislators on whom you’ll need to focus. Consider: Committee chairpersons where your legislation may be considered; ranking committee members; legislators where a majority of members reside, etc. These legislators will be your influence “targets.”
- Notify members who reside in districts of targeted legislators—their contact will be very important.

### Pre-Action Alert Checklist

- Some members, by the nature of their business model or specialty, may be more affected by the potential legislation’s impact than others. Alert them to the situation. Ask them to notify colleagues who may not be members for permission to be added to your email alert list.

## The NKBA Action Alert Process- Continued

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### Post-Action Alert Follow – Up

NKBA will notify you of the bill's fate. Then:

- Forward the post-Action Alert update to all Chapter members
- Thank all the members who you know contacted their legislator(s).
- Go to your state legislature's web site and find the roll call vote on the bill. Forward that link to your members and ask them to send a note of thanks to the legislators who voted with the NKBA position.
- Prepare a brief post-Action Alert report for presentation at the next Chapter meeting.
- Send an email to key member grassroots advocates and ask for their feedback. Find out what worked well, what didn't, and how you can improve your next Action Alert.
- Send a report with all information above to the NKBA staff
- Identify and recognize your members who were helpful with this effort. Whether they contacted their legislator, helped spread the word to friends and colleagues, or sent a letter to the editor of the local paper, all forms of assistance should be recognized.
- Notify NKBA Chapter of members who were especially helpful.
- Obtain quotes from legislators regarding your Chapter's grassroots impact and use them in future advocacy recruiting efforts, Action Alerts, etc.
- Consider writing an article for *NKBA Magazine* with the Action Alert results, featuring key members and legislators (see above) who helped in the effort

## Grassroots Advocate Interest Inventory

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Thank you for volunteering to become a National Kitchen & Bath Association Advocacy Volunteer. Combining your voice with other concerned members will benefit our profession and customers.

There are many roles associated with effective advocacy. To maximize your advocacy volunteer experience, we want to find out what interests you. We encourage you to let us know what appeals to you, so that we can design your advocacy experience around your interests.

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## Glossary of Legislative Terms

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**AMEND:** the action a legislator takes to change or propose a change in a bill, motion, report, or even another amendment by adding, omitting, or altering language.

**APPEAL:** a resort to a higher court from a lower court.

**BIENNIUM:** 1) the two-year period by which the state budget is set. Money is appropriated for a two-year budget cycle during the odd-numbered years. The fiscal biennium runs from July 1 in an odd-numbered year to June 30 in the next odd numbered year. 2) the two-year legislative term, which begins in January of an odd numbered year and ends in December of an even-numbered year.

**BILL:** a proposal calling for a new law, a change in current law, the repeal of current law, or a constitutional amendment. It consists of a title, enacting clause, and body (text), which is examined and approved by the reviser of statutes.

**BILL, HOUSE ADVISORY:** a proposal for the initiation, termination, alteration, or study of a law or program which may be drawn up informally in everyday terms. Advisories are used only in the House.

**BILL, RESOLUTION:** a proposal, introduced as a House or Senate file, that urges another governmental body, to take or refrain from a certain action. A resolution can also simply express the opinion, sentiments, or intent of a body, or both, if the resolution is a joint one.

**CALENDAR:** a list of bills that have passed General Orders and are awaiting their third reading, or final passage, in either the House or the Senate.

**CAUCUS:** 1) a group of House members or the same political party or faction such as the "DFL Caucus," the "Republican Caucus," the "Majority" or the "Minority Caucus"; 2) a meeting of such a group

**COMPANION BILLS:** identical bills introduced in the House and Senate.

**CONCURRENCE:** action in which one body approves or adopts a proposal or action taken by the other house.

**CONFERENCE COMMITTEE:** a group of equal numbers from the House and Senate, who are appointed to reach a compromise between the House and Senate versions of a bill.

**CONFERENCE COMMITTEE REPORT:** language of a bill as agreed upon by a conference committee.

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## Glossary of Legislative Terms- Continued

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**FINAL PASSAGE:** the vote taken on a bill after its third reading, requiring a majority of all elected members of a legislative body for approval.

**FIRST READING:** the reporting of a bill to the body at the time of its introduction and referral to committee.

**FLOOR:** after a bill passes through the committee process, it is sent to the "floor" in either the House or Senate, meaning it is placed on any of the various bill lists while awaiting debate by all members.

**INTRODUCED (N., INTRODUCTION):** the formal presentation of a bill to a body of the Legislature. The bill gets its first reading at this time and is then referred to a committee.

**JOURNALS:** refers to either the Journal of the Senate or the Journal of the House, which are the official records of the respective bodies.

**LEGISLATIVE INTENT:** what the Legislature really meant when it approved a specific law.

**LEGISLATIVE SESSION:** the term session is used loosely and has many different meanings -- 1) the two-year period during which the Legislature meets; 2) regular session refers to the annual meetings of the Legislature; 3) daily sessions refer to the times when the House and Senate meet in their respective chambers.

**LINE ITEM VETO:** (see veto, line item)

**LOBBYIST:** a person acting individually or for an interest group who tries to influence legislation.

**MAJORITY:** the party that has the most members elected in either the House or the Senate.

**MINORITY:** the party that has the fewest members elected in either the House or Senate.

**NEW LANGUAGE:** the language in a bill that is added, or proposed to be added, to existing state law. New language in bills is always underlined.

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## Glossary of Legislative Terms - Continued

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**OMNIBUS:** a term used to describe tax, education, appropriations, and other bills that contain many different proposals.

**PAGE:** a person employed by the House or Senate to run errands, to assist committees, and to perform a variety of other legislative tasks.

**POCKET VETO:** (see veto, pocket)

**RECOMMENDATION:** the action a committee takes on a bill. Although in common usage a committee is said to pass a bill, technically, it recommends a bill to pass.

**REPEAL:** to eliminate a law, or section of a law, by an act of the Legislature.

**RESOLUTION:** (see bill, resolution)

**SESSION:** 1) the biennial period during which the Legislature meets;

**SPONSOR:** a chief author or co-author of a bill.

**STRICKEN LANGUAGE:** language that is proposed to be eliminated from existing state law. Stricken language in bills is always crossed out.

**THIRD READING:** the final reporting of a bill to the body before its final passage. No amendments, except amendments to the title, may be offered after the third reading unless unanimous consent is granted.

**VETO:** the constitutional power of the governor to refuse to sign a bill, thus preventing it from becoming law unless it is passed again (with a two-thirds majority) by both houses of the Legislature.

**VETO, POCKET:** rejection of a bill by the governor after the Legislature has adjourned sine die, preventing its reconsideration by the Legislature.

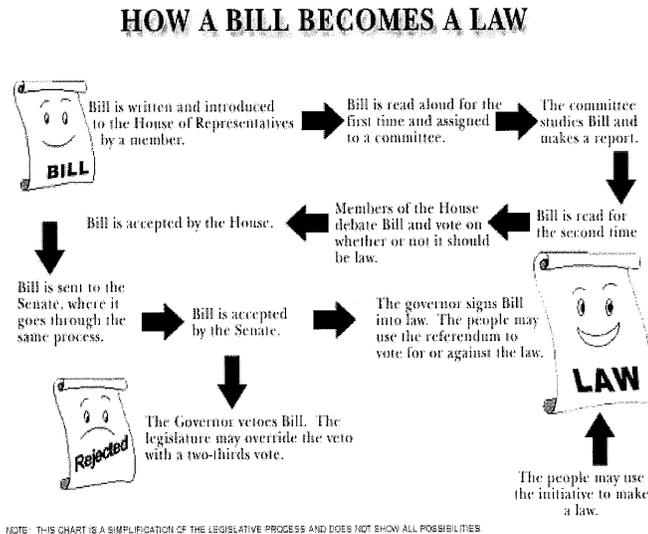
*Text primarily taken from People and the Process: A Legislative Study Guide, published by the Minnesota House of Representatives Public Information Office, 1991.*

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# The Legislative Process

## How a Bill Becomes Law

Following is a general description of how a bill becomes law in most state legislatures and the U.S. Congress. It is somewhat of a simplification of the process and does not show all possibilities. Nevertheless, this is the typical route.



There are two chambers (House and Senate, or Assembly and Senate) in all state legislatures except for Nebraska, which has a unicameral legislature. The House and Senate are each referred to as chambers of the legislature. A bill has to get through both chambers before it can even be considered by the Governor.

- Legislator receives idea for a bill through personal experience, a lobbyist, constituent input, legislative colleague or legislative staff.
- The title of the bill is read on the floor of the House or Senate, depending on where the bill originated.
- The bill is then referred to the appropriate committee of the House or Senate.
- Public hearings are conducted. Amendments may be added. If there are so many amendments that the bill is substantially changed, a substitute bill may be adopted.
- When the bill is voted out of committee, it is typically sent to a Rules Committee, which decides whether to send it to the House or Senate floor. Legislation can easily languish in the Rules Committee.

## The Legislative Process- Continued

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- If referred out of the Rules Committee, the chamber where the bill originated votes on the bill.
  - If it passes the House, the bill is sent to the Senate where it follows the same route: introduction, committee assignment, assignment to the Rules Committee and then to the Senate floor for a vote.
  - If there are substantial differences, the bill may be sent to a Conference Committee, comprised of members of the House and Senate. The Conference Committee report then has to be voted on by the House and Senate.
  - Once the House and Senate approve it, the Governor can either sign the bill into law or veto the bill. Most state legislatures can override a veto with a two-Thirds vote, thus making the bill law.
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## **Additional Chapter Vice Presidents of Governmental Relations Policy**

Updated 2008

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If a Chapter has at least 50 dues-paying members from a particular state/province based upon their preferred mailing address on the Association's membership records, it is entitled to elect a Vice President of Government Relations to represent the members from that state. If there are fewer than 50 members from the particular state or province, but that state or province is not represented by a Vice President of Government Relations in any other Chapter (meaning that the state or province has no Vice President of Government Relations anywhere representing those members), then the Chapter may petition the national President of the Association for permission to elect or also appoint another Vice President of Government Relations from that unrepresented state or province.

The policy is best explained by way of example. Using the Baltimore-Washington Chapter, NKBA's records show that the Chapter has members from the following states:

**Maryland – 812 mbrs**

**Virginia – 557 mbrs**

**Dist. of Columbia – 36 mbrs**

The Chapter's current Vice President of Government Relations is from Virginia. Since there are more than 50 members from Maryland, the Chapter may elect a Vice President from that state as well. Finally, since there are fewer than 50 Chapter members residing in the District of Columbia but there is no Vice President of Government Relations representing Washington, D.C. in any other Chapter, the Baltimore-Washington Chapter can also petition the national President for permission to elect or appoint a third Vice President of Government Relations to represent the D.C. members. Thus, the Chapter may have 3 Vice Presidents of Governmental Relations.

Another example will further clarify the policy. The Emerald Coast Chapter has members residing in the following states:

Florida – 94 members

Alabama – 23 members

Mississippi – 6 members

Georgia – 3 members

Nevada – 2 members

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The current elected Vice President of Government Relations is from Alabama. Since that individual was elected through the nomination process, he/she may continue to serve even though the Chapter has only 23 members from that state (and Alabama already has a Vice President of Governmental Relations in the Alabama Chapter). However, since this members from that state (and Alabama already has a Vice President of Governmental Relations in the Alabama Chapter). However, since this Chapter also has 94 members from Florida, they may elect a Vice President from Florida. The Chapter would not, however, be permitted to also elect a Vice President of Government Relations from the other states with fewer than 50 members because each of those states already has or is entitled to have a Vice President of Governmental Relations representing it in other Chapters (e.g., Mississippi in the Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas Chapter; Georgia in the Georgia Chapter; and Nevada in the Sierra/Nevada Chapter).

The goal is to ensure that we have at least one Vice President of Government Relations representing each state in which there reside a significant number of Chapter members, and if there are enough state members in a Chapter, they should be entitled to have a Vice President of Government Relations representing them in their state. National staff will confirm with the Chapter Secretary the addresses of the nominees for the position and the number of members of each Chapter from a particular state.

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## Available NKBA Forms for the VP Government Relations on the NKBA Website

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The following forms for the VP Government Relations position are available on the NKBA website [www.nkba.org](http://www.nkba.org) . These forms can be accessed by clicking on the link below. They are also located under the Member Center, Tools For Chapters, Chapter Officer Forms.

- [Advocacy Recruitment Questionnaire](#)
  - [Legislator Meeting Feedback Form](#)
  - [Roberts Rules of Order](#)
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