GOLDEN RULES OF ADVOCACY


1. **Be fair toward public officials.** With very rare exceptions, they are honest, intelligent, and want to do the right things. Your job is to inform them effectively about what you think is right.

2. **Avoid cynicism.** Government and politics may be faulty, but so is every profession. A disdainful attitude is an expensive luxury these days for it poisons the well and immobilizes the will to work for social betterment. Those who live on an island should not make an enemy of the sea. Or try a Sam Rayburn maxim: “Never spit chewing tobacco on the cake you hope to eat yourself.” In short, the political process we too often disparage is still our best hope for effecting constructive social change.

3. **Be understanding.** Put yourself in the public official’s place. Try to understand his/her problems, outlook and aims.

4. **Be friendly.** Don’t contact public officials only when you want their help. Take pains to keep in touch with them throughout the year, every year.

5. **Be reasonable.** Recognize that there are legitimate differences of opinion. Never indulge in threats.

6. **Be thoughtful.** Commend the right things public officials do.

7. **Be charitable.** The failure of public officials to do what you wanted may be your responsibility if you have not done a good job in preparing, presenting and following through on your case. Every public official knows that you can express your opinion at the ballot box.

8. **Be constructive.** You don’t like to be scolded, pestered or preached to. Neither do public officials. Present an alternative, a new way of looking at the problem, a new formula, and not merely negative carping.

9. **Be realistic and persistent.** Remember that controversial legislation and regulation usually result in a compromise not wholly satisfactory to any one contending party. Progress, although incremental, is no less real - and may even be more enduring for its evolutionary development that builds wider support.

10. **Be practical.** Recognize that each lawmaker has commitments and that a certain amount of vote-trading goes on in all legislatures. Don’t chastise lawmakers who normally support you if they vote against one of your bills. This doesn’t necessarily mean that they have deserted