Santa Clara County Supervisor Joe Simitian's
13 Tips for Successful Advocacy

1. Develop a relationship before you arrive (a year, an hour, a 15-minute phone call).

2. Understand what motivates your audience (i.e., the Member or his/her staff); and tell them why they care.

3. Understand what is possible and what is not.

4. Find a floor manager.


6. Bring them solutions, not problems (interest group agreement).

7. Describe the elements of a solution, rather than insist on your solution.

8. Do not chastise, insult or threaten the Member or his/her staff.

9. Understand that sometimes less is more.

10. Layer your campaign.


12. Make it easy to say yes.

13. The value of a “thank you.”

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Developing a Plan

1. **What's your problem?** Start with our own concerns and ideas about solutions and then develop a consensus definition.
2. **Look at things from more than one angle.** What differing perspectives exist about your problem and are some of them valid? Are there ways that your solution can also address those concerns?
3. **Understand the process.** Find someone with experience to mentor you about the process.
4. **Figure out who has the wrench.** Who is involved in making the policy or decision? What are the roles of the staff and your representatives?
5. **Get Real.** Understand what is possible and what is not.
6. **Plan a path to success** and have determination to get there.

The Campaign

1. **Develop relationships with the decision makers before you arrive.** If you don’t know them, find an ally who does.
2. **Understand your audience.** What motivates them? Tell them why they should care about your issue. What messages will resonate best with different decision makers.
3. **Find an advocate (or two) who will be an effective floor manager.**
4. **Be Realistic.** Explain what realistic solution you want, not just what is the problem. Describe the elements of a solution, rather a precise solution. Make it easy to say yes.
5. **Understand the role of compromise and that it may be an important element of success.**
6. **Don’t chastise, insult or threaten the official or his/her staff.** Doing so may drive them to defending their staff or themselves.

**We won! What now?**
1. Thank people for listening to you and for their help.
2. Be willing to help support implementation.