

Affordable Housing Advocacy – Building Relationships with Lawmakers

Building the relationship:

1. The relationship often begins with staffers and they'll become your best ally as you work toward engaging the Congressperson/Senator.
 - a. Identify the staff; it's important to know who is scheduling, who handles housing issues and the state director.
 - i. Know lawmakers schedule and be sure to schedule in-state meetings 2 or 3 months in advance to ensure you get a meeting.
 - b. Be seen, attend local town hall meetings and meet with staffers even when the Congressperson/Senator is not available. You'll have a better chance of getting meetings, scheduling property visits and grand openings/special events.
 - i. We always publish town hall meeting notices to our residents in the host communities and encourage residents to go out and support affordable housing. "What are you doing to support affordable housing and create new housing?" "Share your story and why affordable housing is important to you".
 - c. Know their committees, issues and stance. This will allow you the opportunity to leverage their stance and relate it back to housing.
 - i. Always work toward connecting the dots with their issues to housing.
 - ii. As an example, many republicans continue promoting infrastructure and building our communities, this can't be accomplished without affordable housing.
2. Meeting with Congresspersons and Senators
 - a. Be prepared with talking points and materials (NAHMA has great materials and can assist with current issues regarding affordable housing and state specific information).
 - i. It's important for them to know the number of affordable communities in your state and the number of families being supported.
 - ii. Provide the number of families your company provides housing for.
 - b. When having a meeting with the Congressperson/Senator at a property;
 - i. We always ask if they want media (staffers will handle); we have one Senator who does not want media there.
 - ii. We identify three residents in our community that we want them to share their story with the Congressperson/Senator while there and ensure that this is coordinated ahead of time.
3. Grand Openings/Special Events
 - a. Media is essential at these events and we always schedule photo opportunities with our residents and the Congressperson/Senator
 - b. We encourage our residents to thank the Congressperson/Senator and to continue supporting affordable housing. Make them feel good and put a face to affordable housing.
 - c. We are working on a veteran housing project and Veteran Affairs, the Mayor and Senator are already aware and engaged; the project hasn't been fully funded yet and the Senator wants to know how they can support this.