

LOBBYING FROM A FAITH PERSPECTIVE

How can people of faith be true to our values and traditions, and also strategic and effective in communicating with government decision-makers about public issues? Here are a few suggestions gathered from professional staff of Christian denominations who served as lobbyists for their national church organizations.

We are Advocates. “Advocacy” is a better term than “lobbying” for describing our activities to bring values and social concerns to the attention of elected officials. We speak not for ourselves, but for the wellbeing of society and creation.

We educate ourselves on the facts, but we do not wait to speak until we are experts, for we know that politics is where public priorities are decided and resources are raised and allocated for good or ill. We know that these decisions are fundamentally values decisions that affect everyone. We speak as citizens concerned about the good of all, urging our elected officials to ensure that government implements policies and programs that support the well-being of all more than the benefit of the few. We advocate for the good of the whole, for all, and for future generations.

We Speak for what is Right, not what is Popular. We ask for what we believe is right, even when it may not be seen as politically popular. We respect the opinions of political strategists, and seek their counsel, for we are concerned to dedicate resources effectively. Yet, we place political tactics as a second priority below doing what we believe is right. We are called by faith to be courageous.

We Call for Fundamental Solutions. We hold to enduring principles over pursuit of quick and easier victories when such “quick fixes” might undermine the principles upon which our faith is based – principles of justice, peace, reconciliation, protection of the poor and weak...

We Seek to Understand. We are compassionate toward our elected officials, and recognize that those who hold public office face many complex pressures. Our job is not to condemn, but to understand different points of view. Compassion does not mean we keep quiet when our perspective differs. Understanding an elected official’s point of view enables us to speak with kindness, and to focus more precisely on where there may be differences in information, values, or priorities.

We Support and Build Relationships. We build support for elected officials to do the right thing, and do not make threats when their actions violate our trust. We build relationships based on respect and commitment to societal good, not back-scratching. We are quick to



PO Box 764
Richmond VT
05477

(802) 434-3397 - info@vecncc.org - www.vecncc.org

embrace the good actions of our “opponents”, and we separate actions from the people who do them.

We Persist. We do not assume quick and easy results, but set our hearts, minds and hands to work for good. We take the long-term view – that anything worth doing will likely take time to accomplish. Thus, we are not easily discouraged from our advocacy tasks, because it is not our own preferences that we seek to accommodate, but a larger good that we seek to advance.

We Serve. Our purpose is not victory on our own terms, or victories we can claim to have achieved, but to help our society be better aligned with enduring principles and values.

By Tina Clarke, Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow, www.healthytomorrow.org

We are a diverse network of Christians in Vermont working together to serve the common good through public worship and prayer; acts of mercy and care; and loving prophetic witness for peace, justice and the integrity of creation.