



Legislative Advocacy in Maine

January 20, 2011

Lock Kiermaier,
Advocacy & Outreach Coordinator, GrowSmart Maine
Chair, Advocacy Committee of the Advisory Council to the Maine Downtown Center

In preparing this brief description of what I think makes for effective legislative advocacy in Maine, I will attempt to follow one of my cardinal rules: make every possible effort to summarize your written comments provided to the Legislature on a particular issue to one single sided page! Legislators are very busy people and often appreciate a cogent and straight forward one page summary. An effective one page summary is easier to remember and can always be supplemented by additional written information, particularly when specifically requested by a legislator.

Other brief recommendations include:

- When presenting testimony before a legislative committee, try to avoid reading your written testimony verbatim. Legislators can read quite well and will pay more attention to a snappy and concise summary of what you had to say in your written testimony. Most importantly, legislators are likely to remember the points you are trying to make if you keep your remarks short, simple and direct;
- When providing testimony and responding to questions about your testimony, never comment on something that you are really not sure about. Most of the time, legislators know when someone does not know what they are talking about and appreciate a candid response that indicates that the speaker does not know the answer to that particular question. In such a situation, state your willingness to get the information and bring it back to the committee at a later date;
- When advocating for a particular issue which is hotly contested, look for opportunities for meaningful compromise that retain important elements of the change that you are striving for. For the most part, effective legislation is built on significant compromise. The process of compromise need not represent a capitulation or sacrifice of ideals. Instead, well conceived compromise often contains the best elements of opposing points of view; and
- Similarly, try not to personalize a policy disagreement with those that are in opposition to you. Maintaining a healthy respect for an opposing point of view that you strongly disagree with helps to keep the doors open for meaningful compromise, reduces the possibility of burning bridges and therefore opens future opportunities for collaboration with folks that you never imagined was possible!

Please feel free to contact me to further discuss any of these suggestions. I can be reached by phone (446-0651) or e-mail (lock@growsmartmaine.org).