

## GOLDEN RULES

### For Those Who Work with Public Officials

1. **DON'T UNDERESTIMATE PUBLIC OFFICIALS.** With very rare exceptions, they will be honest, intelligent and want to do the right thing. Your job is to inform them what you think is right.
2. **DON'T LOOK DOWN ON GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS.** They may be faulty, but so is most any profession for that matter. A disdainful attitude is an expensive luxury these days.
3. **BE UNDERSTANDING.** Put yourself in the public official's place. Try to understand his problems, his outlook, his aims. Then, you are more likely to persuade him to do the same in understanding yours.
4. **BE FRIENDLY.** Don't contact public officials only when you want their help. Invite them to be guests at meetings. 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 or recriminations. They are confessions of weaknesses.
6. **BE THOUGHTFUL.** Commend the right things public officials do. That's the way you like to be treated. Any public official will tell you that he gets dozens of letters asking him to do something, but very few thanking him for what he has done.
7. **DON'T BLAME PUBLIC OFFICIALS FOR "FAILING" TO DO WHAT YOU WANTED.** The failure may be yours if you have not done a good job in preparing, presenting and following through on your case.
8. **BE COOPERATIVE.** If a public official makes a reasonable request, try to comply with it. Don't back away for fear that "it's a deal" or that you're "getting into politics".

9. **BE REALISTIC.** Remember that controversial legislation and regulation usually results in compromise. It has always been so and it will always be so in a democracy.
10. **BE PRACTICAL.** Recognize that each legislator has commitments and that a certain amount of vote trading goes on in a legislature. So, don't chastise a legislator who normally supports you if he happens to vote against one of your bills. This doesn't necessarily mean he has deserted your whole program. Give him the benefit of the doubt; he will appreciate it and remember that you did.
11. **BE A GOOD OPPONENT.** Fight issues...not persons. And be ready with alternatives or solutions as well as with criticisms. This is constructive opposition.
12. **BE INFORMED.** Never meet with legislators to advocate a position without first studying the facts and the arguments pro and con. The mere fact that you want a legislator to adopt one position or another won't be enough to convince him. Do your homework. And, remember that while some votes may be firmly committed, there will be many others that can be swayed on the basis of sound arguments that are properly presented.
13. **LEARN TO EVALUATE AND WEIGH ISSUES.** Many bills that are tossed into the hopper "by request" are never intended to become law. So, don't criticize legislators for the bills that are introduced, and don't call out the army until you're sure a bill is serious.
14. **DON'T BREAK A PROMISE.** This is a cardinal rule. If you tell the legislator you'll do something, stick to the bargain.
15. **DON'T CHANGE HORSES IN THE MIDDLE OF THE STREAM.** Never leave a legislator stranded out on a limb by changing your position after he has publicly stated a position that you have urged him to take.
16. **DON'T PARTICIPATE IN DISCUSSIONS ABOUT LEGISLATORS BEING "BOUGHT" OR "PAID OFF".** You have absolutely nothing to gain and everything to lose by engaging in such activity. Furthermore, chances are it will not be true.