**You’ll Lobby for Me Whether or Not I Join!**

By Bob Harris, CAE

Non-members benefit from lobbying --- maybe you call them “freeloaders.” I call it a “legislative welfare” program. We respond to their objections with rationale like: “your membership allows access to influence the process,” or, “your participation increases our clout.”

The fact is, successful lobbying benefits everyone, not only dues paying members.



**Solving the Dilemma**

The issue is how to make lobbying a member benefit; an activity respected by prospects and members alike.

Do this by transforming lobbying efforts and results into tangibles. A tangible benefit is one you can publish, sell, share, distribute and control. It positions the organization as a leader by managing and controlling the information.

Try these ideas to transform lobbying into tangible benefits:

**Compliance Manual** – When a law is enacted, create a compliance manual that describes how the law came about, the exact wording, definitions, how to comply and where to go for help. Every law has a history and there is plenty of content to create a manual.

**End of Session Report** – A summary of the legislative session is valued by members and retained for reference. It summarizes the organization’s platform, efforts and results.

**Legislative Directory** – Create a legislative directory with contact information and committees of interest. Or, adapt an existing directory by imprinting the cover or inserting several center pages describing the organization’s issues or key bills. A legislative directory is an excellent member benefit and sellable to non-members.

**Legislative Platform** – The organization or lobbyist determines a legislative agenda for the upcoming session. Prepare the legislative platform in a brochure to inform members of issues and goals.

**Legislative Audit Checklist** – Most businesses comply with regulations enforced by multiple agencies. For example, a restaurant complies with licensing, smoking, safety, taxation, and labor laws, at a minimum. Describe all the regulations monitored and influenced by the association or chamber to create a legislative audit checklist. Distribute it to members annually as a checklist of the many laws requiring compliance. The checklist format serves as a practical guide to conformance.

**Regulatory Audit Service** – Expand the value of the legislative audit checklist by employing staff to visit with members who want help in understanding and complying with the laws influenced by the association. One great value of the audit service is that the association has an engaging relationship with members wanting help. A second advantage is the collection of data about compliance problems that will result in better lobbying.

To protect your lobbying program as a member benefit, consider ways to transform information into tangibles. Let non-members access the information at reasonable fees.

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Note: Bob Harris, CAE, wrote the book, *How to Influence Florida Government*, and focuses on effective association operations and leadership development. Contact him at bob@RCHCAE.com or 850/570-6000.