Advocacy and the Role of Trustees
Introduction

Lobbying is not a dirty word.

It is communicating and sharing information with elected officials who are in the position of making decisions about libraries.
Overview

• Ways to lobby
• What officials don’t know
• Cultivating relationships
• Why libraries don’t get their share
• Being part of the political process
Lesson Objective

By the end of this lesson you will be able to:

• Describe ways of lobbying
• Communicate with officials more effectively
Trustees Are Well Positioned

- See the users point of view
- Perspective on public services
- Speak for the consumer
- Represent, understand their communities
- Connections to help the library cause
- Have the right to be heard
Ways to Lobby

• Legislative days
• Grassroots letter, email, phone campaigns
• Rallies, fundraising, special events
• Partnerships with other organizations
• Direct contacts with decision makers
Elected Officials May

- Not understand what libraries do
- Not know how they are funded
- Underestimate public’s attachment
Elected Officials May

- Resist decisions that raise taxes
- Never hear complaints about libraries
- Be pressured by special interests
- Be enticed by privatization
Trustees Can Educate About:

- Value of investing in libraries
- Relationship of academics to library services
- Libraries contribution to economic development
- How much communities love their libraries!
Some Tips for Communicating

• Support the director
• Understand local power structure
• Hone listening skills
• Avoid appearing political
• Develop relationships with decision-makers
• Personalize the library experience

More tips are in your toolkit
Why are Libraries Short Changed?

- Have downplayed political connections
- Not informed about legislative process
- Professional value not communicated
- Negative perceptions and stereotypes
- Negotiating with non-librarians
- Believe everyone loves libraries
Why are Libraries Short Changed?

• Cut budgets without consequences
• Don’t want to get involved in politics
• Are team players, consensus builders
• Compete with more politically astute organizations
• Compete with other worthy causes
Part of the Political Process

- Trustees are “legislators” within library
- Are public officials responsible for funds
- Work with various layers of control
Getting to know the political process is absolutely necessary for an effective trustee.
Group Exercise
Resources

A list of books is at the end of this section in your toolkit.
REVIEW

• Trustees can educate officials
• Advocacy is a major responsibility
• Political awareness is an important skill