



Working with the Legislators—The New “Ten Commandments!”


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28 years of policymaking in the Michigan Senate

- ▶ Worked for seven different SML and on several different versions of wetland reform—consistently fought off the push to abandon the state's wetland program
- ▶ Seems like a new fight every year with the interest to put more oversight and create more exemptions for the state's program.
- ▶ Legislature growing more and more conservative and term limits make this even more challenging.
- ▶ That being said, I present the TEN COMMANDMENTS OF WORKING WITH LEGISLATORS!




A Quick Quiz to Test your Knowledge of the Legislature!

- ▶ 1. Which branch of government is charged in the Constitution with protecting our natural resources?
- ▶ 2. What happens to a bill when both chambers disagree over the contents?
- ▶ 3. What is a tie-bar?
- ▶ 4. What are the two leadership positions in the Legislature? Can they control committee activity?
- ▶ 5. How many readings does a bill go through in each chamber?
- ▶ 6. What constitutionally proscribed measures do citizens have to directly impact law?
- ▶ 7. What is the potentially the most powerful, yet often destructive force in lawmaking?

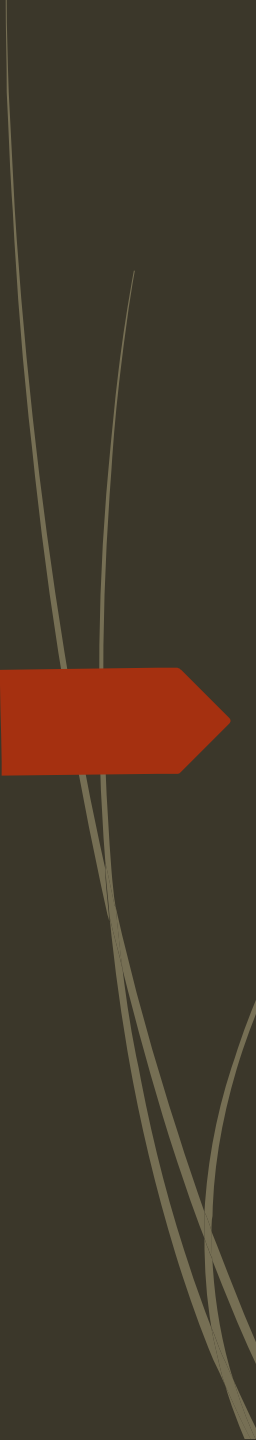
1. THOU SHALL BE FRIENDLY AND OFFER PRAISE!

- ▶ Start off your talk with a friendly opening and offer your understanding of the difficult and time consuming process of working on important legislation
- ▶ Cite an act or a bill sponsored recently by the legislator and commend their work on it



2. THOU SHALL BE WELL- ORGANIZED AND CONCISE

- ▶ You have limited time to make a difference
- ▶ It is fine to introduce yourself and chit chat, but...
- ▶ Outline your issues and be concise and wrap it up in a summary fashion
- ▶ The express your desired outcome and offer to help in the future!



3. THOU SHALL OFFER PERSONAL STORIES AND LOCAL PERSPECTIVE

- ▶ A great local story that demonstrates your issue is worth so much to a legislator
- ▶ Don't avoid being a name-dropper—key people in the district can make an impact!
- ▶ If it is a historical issue, bring that to bear too!

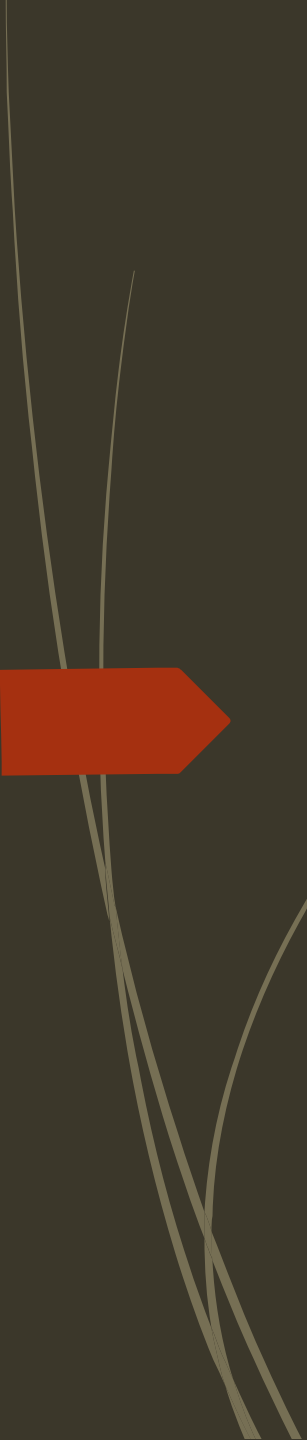


4. THOU SHALL NOT CRITICIZE OR CONDEMN THE PROCESS. LEARN TO PLAY THE GAME!

- Understand the mechanics and the nuances of the policymaking game
- Know the players and do not criticize the process!
- **There is so much that goes on “behind the scenes!”**
- If you criticize, you are losing!

5. THOU SHALL OFFER TO PROVIDE SUPPORT AND GOOD INFORMATION

- Bring in local information—good accurate information as to how the issue has impacted the district.
- Offer to bring in local resources to help with the issue! Local officials have been critical when it comes time to helping frame an issue in legislation.




6. THOU
SHALT NOT
PROPOSE
NEW TAXES
or FEES

- Fees and taxes are a death blow to any policy idea these days!
- Try to solve your issue without resorting to new funding needs

7. THOU SHALL NOT PROPOSE UNDULY BURDENSOME REGULATIONS

- ▶ Just as fees and taxes are a death blow, so can new regulations that impact business opportunities
- ▶ Try incentivizing rather than mandating actions
- ▶ Great example—local recycling programs and green seal approval



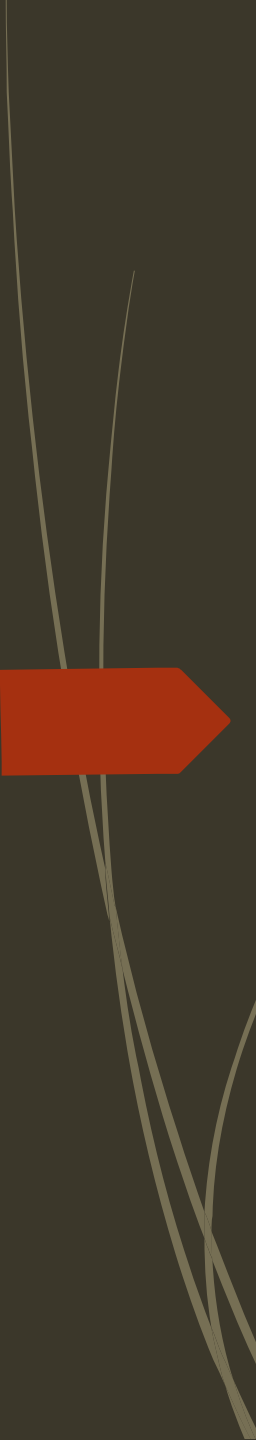
8. THOU SHALL AVOID STICKY ISSUES DURING AN ELECTION CYCLE

- ▶ If you have a tough issue, try to schedule it at time when election cycle is in off year.
- ▶ Political advisors will warn against any tough issues that can be spun negative!



9. THOU SHALL REMEMBER THAT LEGISLATORS ARE HUMAN BEINGS!

- Legislators work hard and care and want to please their constituents
- Cant do it all and they need a break
- This stuff about them working only a few days a week is hogwash—they work harder for the pay they get than most folks I know!
- It is often a thank-less job!



10. THOU
SHALL NOT
HOLD
GRUDGES—A
LOSS TODAY
DOES NOT
MEAN YOU
CAN'T WIN
TOMORROW!

- If you don't get your issue addressed, don't hold a grudge
- Walk away and say thanks and remember that tomorrow is another day.
- You have made an impact and don't forget that it is a long process



Citizen Engagement is critical

- One of the problems we have in Lansing and in Washington is lack of a robust process, with citizens failing to engage
- Take the time to meet and to get to know your legislator and the caucuses in general and pay close attention to the leadership
- The process is so well-orchestrated that citizens need to be engaged to break through the “iron triangle” that controls policy.

In the End, if we don't
engage, we all lose!

Thank-you!
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