

Purpose

Building and Maintaining Meaningful Relationships with Candidates and Elected Officials

MHA members are the cornerstone to vibrant, healthy and economically strong legislative districts in Montana. It's important that all of Montana's legislative representatives, and those seeking office, understand the role our hospitals play in the communities they represent. The purpose of this document is to support MHA members in developing and sustaining meaningful relationships that illuminate for lawmakers the issues and impacts of our hospitals and healthcare facilities. We encourage you to use this guide to begin building these relationships, sharing information, and becoming a valuable source of information to help guide the policies that could impact your facilities, your staff, your patients, and the communities you serve.

Introductions: Action Items

- Introduce yourself via phone call or email, let them know you appreciate their commitment to public service and hope to learn more about them while sharing more about your facility.
- Schedule introductory coffee or lunch meeting ahead of election or legislative session start date.
- Create a networking event where they can meet various members of your team and take a facility tour. Candidates are enticed by the opportunity to meet more people, and showcasing the variety of individuals in your facility demonstrates the breadth of your organization.
- Commit to be a source of facts and information during their campaign and the upcoming legislative session.
- Follow up! Exchange cell phone numbers, follow up with a text committing to be the source of truth for how policies affect their local hospital. Stay in touch monthly.
- Report back to MHA and allow us to help reinforce/support any messages that landed or questions that arose.

Sharing & Gathering Important Information

Key messages to convey

- Share your hospital's history, mission and recent milestones.
- Compile a profile of your hospital including number of employees, payroll, services, unique offerings.
- Go beyond your services. Share ways that your hospital serves the community. Review your community benefit report, health needs assessment, and health improvement plan/implementation strategy for topics/themes.
- Use the most current *MHA State Advocacy Talking Points*.

Be prepared to answer questions about what the most important issues for your organization.

Preserving access to healthcare, ensuring the financial viability of your organization, and reducing costly and unnecessary regulatory burden are likely priorities. Fully funding the state healthcare budget, behavioral health services, and protecting rural healthcare providers may be other examples of policies you want to see supported.

Key questions to ask

- What inspired you to run for office?
- What are your policy priorities?
- I'd like to learn more about your background: where did you grow up, your profession, etc.
- Who has helped mentor you through your candidacy/service?
- How important is healthcare policy to you, and what areas might we be able to help provide more information?