

A Week of Direct Advocacy

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Abstract

If nothing else, last week was historic in that the three major transgender advocacy organizations (National Transgender Advocacy Coalition, National Center for Transgender Equality, and the Gender Public Advocacy Coalition) brought in citizen lobbyists to Washington D.C. from across the United States for a week of direct congressional advocacy. Rolling in to DC on Tuesday, [...]

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If nothing else, last week was historic in that the three major transgender advocacy organizations (National Transgender Advocacy Coalition, National Center for Transgender Equality, and the Gender Public Advocacy Coalition) brought in citizen lobbyists to Washington D.C. from across the United States for a week of direct congressional advocacy.

Rolling in to DC on Tuesday, I had the chance to see the lobbyists for the National Transgender Advocacy Coalition (NTAC) in action. Tuesday night NTAC sponsored a plenary session or “lobbying 101,” instructing those new to lobbying on the importance of presentation and lobbying “do’s and don’t’s.”

On Wednesday morning I set out to visit my Representative, Julia Carson. I had other business to attend to while in DC, but at the very least I wanted to make sure that I’d talked to my own Senators and Representative. I’ve headed many a protest in my day, but this was actually the first time I lobbied a public office holder. For me, anger is much easier to emotion to project publicly than one on one interaction. But like the Byrds song says

“To everything (turn, turn, turn)
There is a season (turn, turn, turn)
And a time for every purpose, under heaven”

This was the time to lobby.

One thing I was shocked by was how friendly even the most conservative offices were. Actually, I got more time to explain why we were there in Richard Lugar’s office than I did in Evan Bayh’s office.

NTAC uses the buddy system, pairing up veteran lobbyists with the newbies (me, for example). I was amazed at the professionalism and polish of those who went along with me. As I learned later, NTAC and GPAC (who lobbied on Friday) have been lobbying Congress for many years (I did contact NCTE for this post, but they did not return my call).

It was a powerful experience, to see the wheels of power turning. To connect with the people in power that make critical life effecting legislative decisions is very important. It's empowered me to lobby on a local level and I'll be returning to Washington D.C. on a routine basis. If you ever get the chance to go, do it.

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