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Following Up After Monumental Moments

Here are some radical thoughts. The world doesn't end after an election or hibernate for two years. Nor does the world brighten and all woes disappear because legislation has been signed into law. The monumental moments may get marked on calendars, but it's often the hard slogging in the weeds and many one-on-one discussions that turn bad into good and good into better. For nonprofit advocates, that means following up with elected officials, bureaucrats, and supporters after monumental moments to ensure that good intentions result in positive impact. Here are two simple practices that the best nonprofit regularly utilize.

Timely Thank Yous



Nonprofit human services providers in Massachusetts recently scored a major legislative victory when the Governor signed an economic development bill that provides \$225 million in supplemental payments for their employees. See related article. The advocacy of the Massachusetts **Providers' Council** and its coalition partners played a large role in the passage of the Economic Development Bill. Advocates wrote letters and called legislators throughout the summer asking them

to support the legislation.

Not crossing their fingers wishing for continuing goodwill from lawmakers, Providers' Council is now urging nonprofit leaders, employees, and clients to write their legislators to express thanks for supporting the legislation. They even make it easy with this tool: "[Use our action center to write a letter of thanks to your legislator for supporting the human services sector.](#)"

The Providers' message to members shares an extra reminder for expressing thanks today: "Our sector will continue to need support from the legislature as we go into the next legislative cycle."

Congratulating the Winners

There's an old saying in nonprofit advocacy that "you never want to have to ask a stranger for favor" ... so get to know policymakers before you need to ask for their vote. We know from questionnaires that candidates completed and provided to several state nonprofit associations this election cycle that many politicians have either (1) a wide range of knowledge about the work of charitable nonprofits, or (2) a worrisome degree of ignorance. But ignorance alone doesn't mean opposition; instead, it signals an opportunity. Now that thousands of candidates are now incoming office holders, nonprofits have the opportunity to reach out and connect – before the need arises to ask for something.



The **North Carolina Center for Nonprofits** recently encouraged its members to take the first step by congratulating newly elected lawmakers. As they state, "The post-election period is an excellent time for nonprofit leaders to build relationships with newly elected members of Congress and the NC General Assembly by sending notes to congratulate them on their recent victories." To make the outreach easier, the state nonprofit association shared some [basic tips and sample emails](#) for use in connecting with newly elected (or newly-e-elected) lawmakers.

Two quick tasks – saying thank you and offering congratulations – can be the best first step in building or burnishing relationships that will be needed when turning monumental moments such as bill enactment and elections into lasting results.