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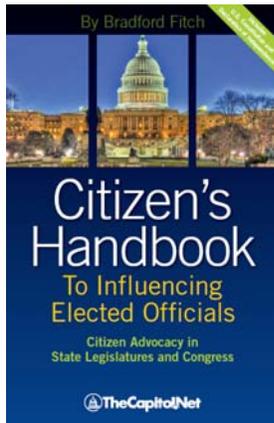
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Who Really Has the Power in Washington? The Surprise Answer: Ordinary American Citizens, A New Book from TheCapitol.Net

ALEXANDRIA, VA – Feeling shut out of the political process by lobbyists and special interests? Insider Bradford Fitch has some good news for you: As it turns out, you're the one in charge—NOT those rich and powerful lobbyists.

Fitch's latest book, *Citizen's Handbook To Influencing Elected Officials: Citizen Advocacy in State Legislatures and Congress*, makes a compelling case for the power of the ordinary citizen to influence members of Congress—IF you understand how to do it right.

Fitch, who worked on Capitol Hill for 13 years as press secretary, legislative director, and chief of staff for four different members of Congress, interviewed dozens of Senators, members of the House of Representatives, and key staff to provide a comprehensive guide to getting members of Congress to listen—and act.

And according to these sources, the real power in Washington is neither in huge campaign donations, nor in high-pressure special interest campaigns. Rather, the power rests with the well-informed, well-prepared, polite but persuasive constituent. Yes, ordinary citizens can gain access, be heard, and see their input influence the way a member of Congress votes.

Some key points:

- It's much easier to influence a decision before the Member makes a public commitment.
- Personal stories are a huge trump card.
- Provide useful information, and you'll be rewarded with access: "The most valuable gift a lobbyist gives a member of Congress isn't a campaign contribution—it's a detailed analysis of how a particular issue affects the lawmaker's district or state" (p. 40).
- When you speak for a larger group, your words carry more weight: "One House Democrat...summed it up. "Their money is beside the point. They can mobilize and intensify a group of motivated constituents who can put the fear of God in members of Congress" (p. 41). But preparedness can outweigh numbers (p. 46).

The book includes several success tips checklists, including ten points to manage a face-to-face meeting (pp. 46-49), seven hints to get written communications noticed (pp. 60-61), and six things staffers look for in a phone call (pp. 63-64). A matrix chart of how legislators rank different issues is one of eight useful appendices.

TheCapitol.Net is a privately held, non-partisan publishing and training company based in Alexandria, VA. For over 30 years, TheCapitol.Net and its predecessor, Congressional Quarterly Executive Conferences, have been training professionals from government, military, business, and NGOs on the dynamics and operations of the legislative and executive branches and how to work with them.

Journalists: to request interviews and review copies, contact the publisher: (703) 739-3790, ext. 0, publisher -at- thecapitol.net

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