

# Association **TRENDS**

The National Weekly Newspaper  
for Association Executives and  
Suppliers. Established 1973  
Published every Friday. \$3/issue

Association *Trends*

## Parliamentary tactics in your GR program?

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It's the end of the congressional session and an excellent time to utilize legislative procedure or parliamentary tactics to achieve your GR objectives. Dozens of bills are passed on the floor, incorporated as part of other bills or find their ways mysteriously into Omnibus bills.

Most GR professionals do not incorporate this very technical area into their planning phase for passing or defeating legislation. However, it is a very important part of a complete GR package to prepare for these tactics early on and during the whole process. It should be high on everyone's agenda for the upcoming 107th Congress.

How does one begin to suggest these tactics? Some might consider whether the bill is supported by the leadership within the subcommittee or committee of jurisdiction. This is done to move it to a "suspension" calendar in the House; network support over in the Senate to place the bill when the bill is received at the Senate desk; and pass it under a "Unanimous Consent Agreement" and on to the White House for signature into law.

These tactics can be accomplished only if both minority and majority chairmen and counsels agree. In the end, connections, of course, do count enormously in putting these techniques into practice.

Can you move an issue or fund a line-item in a House-Senate conference committee without ever having it brought up in subcommittee, committee and "on the floor" of either chamber? You bet, and the word "scoping" should become a new term of art

in your GR jargon. There are so many rules and procedures that can be used either at the committee level or "on the floor" in concert with your congressional supporters that scoping expands the options for moving or defeating legislation of interest to the assn.

For example, with a very supportive staff member and connections to the right leadership within the committee, House and Senate structure, a GR professional can achieve success when many would say it was impossible to do.

Case studies abound for these issues:

- drafting a bill in such a way that it is referred by the parliamentarian and leadership to a committee where you have greater support than another committee;

- securing support from the leadership to jointly refer portions of large bills to a number of committees of jurisdiction further complicating the legislative process for that bill;

- attaching an amendment to legislation with support of the committee staff that did not go through the "proper" process, but is attached at a crucial juncture in the bill's process, perhaps in committee or "on the floor" as a "substitute amendment for the committee amendment to the bill." Staff driven. Staff drafted. GR professional-assisted and leadership-supported.

House and Senate rules are available from the rules committees and an excellent starter book is the *Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process* by Walter J. Oleszek, CQ Press. Details: 703/684-7703 or [john.chwat@chwatco.com](mailto:john.chwat@chwatco.com).