

# SECTION 9

## GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

### THE IMPORTANCE OF POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT

The ability to react swiftly to issues that influence restaurants is critical to the vitality and growth of the entire industry. Local, state and federal governments require restaurants to abide by laws and regulations, some which strike at the core of an operation and have a negative impact on business. If your restaurant is to grow, you must rouse members and build fighting coalitions to stop government when unnecessary and, often times, costly regulations are proposed.

You can help make a difference. City councils are always seeking new sources of revenue. Fees for health inspections, wastewater charges and discharge permits are a few examples of regulations that can take money off the bottom line.

The information enclosed in this section and the chapter resource section of the TRA website will help you and your chapter lobby against any unnecessary government intervention. If you would like to speak with someone about how to handle an issue and mobilize your local chapter, call TRA at 1-800-395-2872.

### TRA'S POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE

Perhaps one of the most important and effective ways you can get members involved is to join TRA's Political Action Committee. The process of deciding which officials to send political contributions to can sometimes be both difficult and expensive. Political Action Committees, or PACs, were established to overcome this problem. Through a PAC, your contribution is joined together with those of similarly minded individuals and presented to elected officials as a reflection of the support they enjoy from your association. The impact can be significant because a PAC can contribute to many of the officials most important to your legislative interests.

Contributing through TRAPAC has many advantages over contributing via private contribution. One such advantage is the opportunity to present a significant contribution at a dinner or party honoring the recipient. At this event, the official will focus on your legislative interests and may also be asked to make a short presentation of interest to the attendees. A second advantage is the fact that the official will come to see your association as supporting him with something other than lip service. The result is increased access to the official by the association's staff and members. Very few successful legislative efforts today do not include participation in a PAC. While you can and should continue to make individual contributions to political candidates, there is no

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substitute for participating in a political action committee such as TRA's for the clout it gives our industry.

Most TRAPAC contributors make their decision based on the size of their company and on how important responsible government is to them in their personal and business lives. Because contributions are voluntary, the size of their personal contribution is totally up to them. However, it is up to you to educate and advise your fellow restaurateurs on how important this process is, especially to their business needs.

The TRAPAC has established different contribution levels. If you feel a prospect has the capability and the willingness to contribute a large amount of money on an annual basis, you may suggest these categories:

President's Diamond Circle	\$10,000
President's Platinum Circle	\$ 5,000
President's Gold Circle	\$ 2,500
President's Cabinet Member	\$ 1,500
President's Council	\$ 1,000
Governor's Council	\$ 500
Contributing Members under	\$500

Contributions can be made in quarterly installments.

**REMEMBER - ALL CHECKS MUST BE  
PERSONAL OR NON-CORPORATE.**

**BY LAW, NO CORPORATE CHECKS ARE  
ALLOWED.**

**CONTRIBUTIONS ARE NOT TAX  
DEDUCTIBLE.**

There are many restaurateurs in your area that you may not know, but who would be willing to talk to you about TRAPAC. Review the membership list for your area. Contact TRA members you know well to not only contribute but to help you select additional members to approach.

One way of ensuring success in fund-raising efforts is to challenge the members. Organize

fund-raising teams and then appeal to their competitive nature. Make it an honor to be the team that raises the most money.

You may focus a team or member on a particular group with which they are familiar. Those who are members of chain or franchising groups will find that the common bond and understanding of another member of that group will make it easier to appeal to that person for their contribution.

Other groups, such as charities, do fund-raising very well. They have utilized a lot of techniques that have been very effective. You may borrow some of the techniques of which you are aware and use them in your fund-raising program.

## PAC FUND-RAISERS

A four pronged approach has been developed that details the methods and means by which our ultimate goal of 100% participation will be achieved. TRA staff will concentrate on developing the potential of the President's Council and encouraging a high participation rate for the employee payroll deduction program. We have developed effective programs to implement at the chapter level that will encourage PAC involvement and development. The national chain restaurant PACs will be encouraged to join the efforts of the TRA members and support the TRAPAC. As well, TRA will address political involvement strategies by raising political awareness. Staff intends to enhance grassroots involvement in the political process at the state and local level.

### **1. Develop a plan for raising money at the chapter level.**

TRA staff will work with the local chapters in developing a fundraising program that effectively garners the most interest and support from every region of the state. Listed below are some techniques that have been used effectively by the TRA chapters. TRA staff will be contacting chapters to arrange the following types of fund-raising activities:

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- Board of Directors: target 100% participation, focus on issues
- Private home - exclusive invitations @ \$250 per person: personal, sense of "join your friends"
- Golf or Bowling Tournaments
- Utilize TRA President on tough sells: "Lunch with the President"
- PAC raffle @ membership meeting (must offer free tickets - i.e. No Purchase Necessary)
- Provide PAC cards/ribbons @ membership meeting, pass the hat
- Wing eating contest, darts, etc.
- Clay pigeon shoots
- Cigar dinner
- Wine tasting

One way of ensuring success in fund-raising efforts is to challenge the members. TRA staff will organize fund-raising teams and then appeal to their competitive nature. We will honor the team that raises the most money with mention in the next issue of *Food For Thought*.

### **2. Develop plans for raising PAC money at state and national level.**

TRA staff will continue to coordinate with national chain restaurant PACs to involve them in TRAPAC fundraising activities.

Currently, TRA staff is working with the National Restaurant Association to identify national chains that have an active political action committee who may want to get involved. Some large restaurant corporations have recently donated to the PAC and we propose to meet with representatives of the national chain restaurants to enlist their support.

### **3. The implementation of an industry employee PAC contribution program using payroll deduction.**

The payroll deduction program has been initiated with Casa Ole managers and franchisees on December 16, 1997 and met with a 50% return on those pledging to contribute to the PAC.

Likewise, 100% of Jumburrito employees pledged to their political action committee. The payroll deduction program will continue to be monitored by TRA Government Affairs staff.

### **4. Expansion of the President's Council, both in numbers and in amount given by each member.**

In order to expand the number of contributors in the President's Council, we propose to enlist the assistance of current President's Council members to solicit non-PAC contributors who are part of the COI (Centers of Influence) program. TRA staff will coordinate with the President's Council members in each chapter to set up PAC awareness meetings with members of COI. These meetings will expound on the importance of the PAC and the necessity of each individual to become involved in giving at a higher level.

Obviously, when someone does contribute, it is appropriate that you immediately respond to him or her with a thank you. A handwritten note is best. A typewritten note or a telephone call is also appropriate. There will be an official "thank you" coming from TRA's President, but the personal response from you will not only be more timely, but more warmly received.

Do not forget to thank members for their time and effort. This can be accomplished by a telephone call or letter, but may be most effective if done in some public way. For example, it might be nice to thank your coalition members at a dinner meeting or in your membership newsletter.

## **TRA'S TRACTION FUND**

The TRACTION (Formerly Strike Fund) is not another name for TRA's political action committee. TRACTION Fund is a forum for promoting the political awareness of the general public and fighting public policy issues which are adverse to the foodservice industry. The TRACTION Fund will provide educational materials on candidates running for office, legislation, and other issues affecting the foodservice and business community.

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The TRACTION Fund is prohibited from making contributions to or endorsing political candidates. However, it can accept corporate funds, thereby providing a way for TRA corporate and associate members to take part in the role TRA plays in the political arena.

The following are just a few of the programs the TRACTION Fund can help fund:

- Fight minimum wage increases.
- Defend lawsuits.
- Enact electric restructuring legislation to benefit TRA members.
- TRA member / candidate mixers.
- TRA attendance at the NRA Public Affairs Conference.
- TRA Membership in Associated Research and the Texas Travel Industry.
- Political Education Booth at TRA's Southwest Foodservice Expo.
- The Legislative Affairs Conference.

Some victories of the TRACTION Fund include:

- The Houston minimum wage fight.
- The City of Garland private club lawsuit.
- The City of Austin minimum wage fight.

TRA's Political Action Committee provides the forum for electing officials responsive to the needs of the foodservice industry. The TRACTION Fund will provide the forum for ensuring those officials provide responsible leadership. Combined TRAPAC and TRACTION Fund make an outstanding investment in the future of your business.

## GOVERNMENTAL KEY CONTACT PROGRAM

TRA members are a necessary link between the Government Affairs Department and the Texas Legislature, Congress and regulatory bodies at all levels of government. Through TRA's Governmental Key Contact Program, Centers of

Influence (COI), members volunteer to use their expertise and personal relationships to help shape legislative and regulatory policy.

## HOW TO BUILD A COALITION

Organizing a group or coalition of business owners and individuals to impact government action will make your position more credible and effective with public officials. In addition, a coalition representing a wide range of industries demonstrates to officials that their proposal will impact more than just a few restaurant owners. Coalitions also have the benefit of providing a larger group to share the workload. Listed below are ways you might get started.

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### Contact Local and State Organizations

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Contact local and state organizations that take a pro-business stance on legislative issues, such as chambers of commerce, travel, hotel, tourist, entertainment and other industry associations. Introduce yourself and discuss proposed ordinances or legislation. Others may not be aware of it, or its potential effects. Discuss how the proposal will impact your business and/or your industry. Encourage others to join you in working on the measure.

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### Assist Other Groups

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If other groups are already working on the regulation, volunteer to assist them in some way. For example, if the local hotel/motel association is circulating a petition, offer to distribute it in your area or to your industry. Monitor media coverage on the issue. If you read about other organizations or individuals on your side of the issue, contact them to inquire if they would like to join your coalition.

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## Organize a Coalition

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Determine if other groups are interested in meeting to discuss how you can work together. If you are successful in organizing a large group, perhaps you will want to form committees. Ask each organization or individual to act in a specific way (i.e. write letters, testify, conduct background research, encourage their members to get involved, etc.). Ask business owners to encourage their employees, customers and neighbors to get involved. There are many local and national organizations that can become allies in assisting you.

One thing you should remember in forming a coalition is that while numbers are good, taking on side issues or non-committed partners is not. Look carefully to see what potential conflicts may arise by bringing someone on board. Also, limit participation to those who have a vested interest in the outcome. The strength of a coalition is the ability to remain united.

Opponents will attempt to divide and conquer by creating conflict within the group or by offering special concessions to one party in the coalition over another. In an effective coalition these issues are addressed up front and dealt with inside the framework of the coalition. This will enable you to maintain the public sense of unity necessary for victory.

## HOW TO LOBBY PUBLIC OFFICIALS

It is not enough to merely locate others who are on the same side of an issue; you must also encourage your fellow TRA members to get involved. Below are some tips on how to mobilize your supporters, both TRA members and those with whom you have formed coalitions.

Inform your supporters of ordinances or legislation and how it may impact their business. This can take many forms: sending a letter or

fax, making telephone calls or including information on legislation in a newsletter. Whatever you decide is the best method of communication, be sure to communicate the urgency and importance of getting involved.

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## Organize

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In order to get everyone involved on the same track, you should have an organizational meeting. A few days before the meeting, start pulling the loose ends together:

- If you expect a crowd, be sure to prepare nametags, so your attendees can mix and mingle more easily.
- Make up a simple sign-in sheet, so attendees can jot down their names, addresses and phone numbers for you.
- If you wish, call your invitees one last time to make sure they still plan to attend.
- Before your meeting, make up an agenda along these lines:
  - Introduce yourself.
  - Let attendees introduce themselves.
  - Discuss the issue at hand.
  - Discuss possible action.
  - Assign tasks.
  - Set the date and time for the next meeting.
  - Photocopy your agenda for your group so they'll be able to follow along.

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## Monitoring Issue Status

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Your first priority is arranging to keep yourselves informed so you can respond promptly to urgent, time-sensitive challenges.

- Ask for volunteers willing to check with the city council and county commissioners to find out what issues are coming up for consideration.
- Ask for volunteers to monitor TV and newspapers.

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- Ask for volunteers to call TRA to learn the status of pending and proposed state legislation.
- Ask for volunteers to call the TRA and NRA offices to learn the status of federal proposals.
- Request that all your volunteers report their findings at each meeting.

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### Get To Know Your Officials

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Build bridges before you need them; it is much easier to build a strong bridge over calm waters than during a raging flood. Far too many constituents come to their elected officials at the eleventh hour, on the brink of a political disaster, having never established relationships with the officials that could help them out of their bind.

If you spend time getting to know the key players before the crisis, you can solve problems in advance. If you don't know your city council, county commissioners, state representatives and senators, congresspersons and U.S. senators well, now is the time to build a relationship. Building bridges of communication in advance of the issue is invaluable when the time comes that you need to work with your public officials. However, if a measure has already surfaced in your area, you'll want to recruit supporters to contact officials immediately on that issue. Remember, while the issue at hand may drive you to establish a relationship with your officials, those who maintain this relationship will have an advantage the next time a proposal is put forward which has an impact on you.

If an issue is at hand, you should ask your supporters to take action:

- Ask them to write to public officials.
- Ask them to call public officials.
- Invite public officials to speak to your group.
- Ask the members of your group to visit with public officials who may have an impact on the process.

- Ask the members of your group to appear at public forums.
- Ask the members of your group to testify at public hearings where the issue is on the agenda.
- Make it easy for your supporters to act. For example, provide your city council members, state legislators or congressperson's names, addresses and telephone numbers in all communications.
- Don't know how to reach your elected officials? For names, addresses and phone numbers of your local, state and federal officials consult the blue pages of your telephone directory or call TRA at 1-800-395-2872.

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### Testifying at Public Hearings

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From time to time, you and your supporters may attend a public meeting or hearing. For instance, you may appear at a city council meeting or a state legislative committee hearing. Public hearings provide a time-honored forum in which citizens can air their views. Usually, you'll need to make prior arrangements to give testimony. If you plan to testify at a city council meeting:

- Call your city clerk and ask him or her how you can get permission to speak. Sometimes all you need to do in order to testify is to show up and raise your hand or sign a witness card.
- Confirm the time, date and place of the meeting.
- If you plan to testify at a state or national committee hearing, call TRA.

An air of formality surrounds discussions of bills and ordinances. Don't be intimidated by all this, but don't ride roughshod over it, either. When you testify, don't wander from the point. Prepare your testimony ahead of time; you'll feel more confident when you speak if you've predetermined what to say.

Before the meeting or hearing, outline the key points you want to make. If other members of

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your group plan to testify, ask them to prepare an outline also and coordinate the group's testimony. When organizing the group's testimony, cover all the important points, but don't repeat them. Keep it short, organized and to the point. The following are some tips for public testimony:

- Most city councils and state legislatures provide opportunities for as many people to testify as possible. Thus each person's speaking time is limited. For the fullest impact, keep your comments brief. Even if only a few other people are testifying, get right to the point. Two or three minutes are plenty of time to say everything you need to say.

**[www.restaurantville.com](http://www.restaurantville.com)**

Check out the website for more information on:

- ◆ Advocacy
- ◆ Lobbying
- ◆ Fighting local issues
- ◆ TRA's Centers of Influence

- Stress one or two main points and tie them in with your dominant theme. You don't have to follow your outline word for word. But don't "wing it" either. Refer to your notes while you speak. This will help you remember your key points. It will also help you keep your presentation organized and brief. However, do not read your testimony!
- Always bring along copies of your typed or handwritten testimony and leave them with the members. That way, you'll continue to have an influence even after the meeting is over.
- Try not to ask the same people to do all the work. If the same stories are repeated over and over, they will become less effective. Most of your supporters will have the best intentions to act, however, sometimes a telephone call to check on their progress will be needed to ensure

follow-through. If you have scheduled individuals to testify, be sure to double-check their schedule the day before the hearing to reconfirm.

At times, local or state governments take months to consider and vote on a proposal. Do not forget to keep your supporters informed of your progress. For example, send an update on the number of letters sent or the number of coalition members who testified at a recent public hearing. Documenting progress may motivate your supporters to keep at it.