

WE LIVE *Local*

Checklist for Success

- ▼ **DEVELOP LOCAL EXAMPLES.** What issues has your council successfully addressed recently? What solutions are you working on? How is your community unique? How will proposed efforts by the Legislature impact your city's ability to self-govern? Be specific, but be succinct.
- ▼ **IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES TO SHARE YOUR MESSAGE.** Meet residents at chambers of commerce meetings, civic group events like Kiwanis or Rotary, faith-based organizations, homeowners associations, neighborhood organizations and senior centers. Consider holding events like "Coffee with a Commissioner."
- ▼ **TEACH RESIDENTS THE PROCESS.** Residents often don't know how to get involved in advocacy at the state level. Share resources on how the legislative process works, and describe the recent climate at the Capitol to restrict local government authority. Explain that residents have an opportunity – and a responsibility – to directly communicate with state lawmakers via letters, phone calls, meetings and public testimony. (They receive massive numbers of emails, so emails usually are not effective.)
- ▼ **IDENTIFY INFLUENCERS.** Reach out to key decision-makers and leaders. If you engage the right business, civic and religious leaders, and community activists, the message of protecting Home Rule will resonate throughout your community.
- ▼ **CREATE EASY WAYS TO GET INVOLVED.** Don't overwhelm a future advocate by demanding too much action too early. Create a simple webpage to direct residents to visit that includes an online sign-up form to get more information. Make hard copies of the form available for residents who aren't tech-savvy.
- ▼ **TAKE INVENTORY.** Immediately follow up. A simple reply acknowledging their commitment to get engaged, coupled with a short survey – no more than three questions – works well. Consider asking: What do you like most about our city? What are the most pressing issues facing our neighborhoods? Are you comfortable with public speaking? These questions will help residents identify what they care about most and help you determine who might be your best advocate on a specific issue.
- ▼ **PAIR ADVOCATES WITH ISSUES.** When asking residents to take action, evaluate your advocates. Be selective about whom you engage based on the issue, their passion and their expertise. If you send every call to action to all individuals who have signed up, they are less likely to respond. However, if you communicate too little, residents may miss important messages.
- ▼ **PROVIDE SAMPLE TALKING POINTS.** Do not just recycle points provided by your lobbyist or the Florida League of Cities. Reflect on the local impact of an issue, and put yourself in the shoes of a business owner, civic leader, religious leader, homeowner or parent – not an elected official. Write from their perspective.
- ▼ **DETERMINE "THE ASK."** In addition to providing education on an issue, we must tell a legislator what action we want to see. Are you looking for a vote in favor or against a particular bill? Are you seeking an amendment or a question to be raised during a debate? Be clear in your desired outcome.
- ▼ **SAY THANK YOU.** Be public about thanking your advocates. If they're willing, get photos and/or videos of their efforts, and highlight them in your digital communications, via social media and during council meetings.

