

ActionMedia MEMO

May 1, 2012

HCDNNJ

RE: Lobby Day: "May I quote you on that?"

During legislative visits, remember that you are not there only to speak; you're there to listen, and report back to others what the legislator actually says.

This is an excellent opportunity to employ a technique that can be used in many situations. It's premised on two ideas:

Every advocate for change is a "reporter", both because of websites, posts, newsletters and other formal media that you are involved in producing, creating content and telling the story; and because you are not representing yourself alone – you have an obligation to share information with the other people you work with and answer to. Public figures should be expected to own their words, to say what they mean and let everyone hear it.

Bring a notepad with you, and be prepared to say, "May I quote you on that?"

WITH ANYONE: When you hear something strong, such as a story that explains why they agree with you (specific experience, people or places) write it down and let them know you'll share that story with others.

WITH OPPONENTS: When you hear something outrageous, take out your pen and start writing. Write down *exactly* what they said, and read it back to them – don't try to reconstruct it afterwards.

"Let me make sure I've got this down as you said it. May I quote you on that?"

If they say, "NO, don't quote me", ask, "Well, what did you mean by that? What can I quote you on?" Every statement about the issues, whether from a friend or opponent, is an opportunity for you to re-tell their story, bringing them in to any other conversation or presentation as a messenger. When people say irresponsible things, and realize it in time to tell you, ("No, don't quote me") then you've put them on notice: Don't be saying that if you don't want to own it.

Share what you hear – with the Network, and in your subsequent conversations and publications. Use the quotes to tell a story about the broadly shared values – prosperity, opportunity, fairness, security, et al. – that this quote either embodies or violates.

Don't be shy about it: what someone in public life says to you is only private if by mutual agreement. If they're not willing to have others hear what they say, they'd better figure out something else to say.

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