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## A Multifaceted Approach to State Government Affairs

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Critical to a successful government affairs program is ensuring that it encompasses various approaches aimed at building awareness with policymakers, leveraging existing and potential supporters, and encouraging political involvement. Failure to execute in any of these areas could affect the success of the outcome of any government affairs initiative. As an industry that interacts on a daily basis with legislative bodies and regulatory agencies, developing a robust and proactive government affairs program for the PEO industry is essential.

NAPEO and its members have done a laudable job in laying the foundation on which to continue building an even more effective government affairs program. While retained lobbyists and professional association staff are important, it is the grassroots actions of industry members that often lead to success. In the early years of the industry, individual NAPEO members took it upon themselves to develop legislative champions and educate regulators. Many of those relationships are still critical today. In fact, long-term relationships are often the most valuable.

More recently, the NAPEO Leadership Councils have begun to focus on a more coordinated approach to grassroots. In 2012, each NAPEO Leadership Council chair will challenge members to meet in person with two members of the legislature in their respective states. These state-level relationships help educate policymakers about issues of importance to PEOs today and often pay future dividends should those state-level lawmakers seek higher office. There are currently a handful of Members of Congress who first championed or worked on PEO initiatives at the state level.

Broadening the base of support for the PEO industry is also important. Historically, NAPEO has leveraged its relationships with business groups (i.e., the National

Federation of Independent Businesses (NFIB), state Chambers of Commerce) in support of its government affairs program. Developing strong ties to other groups with which PEOs or clients have a natural synergy helps to elevate the profile of the industry's issues and can often be the difference in achieving a successful outcome.

The PEO industry's political involvement has steadily increased in recent years and will be an area of greater focus for NAPEO in the coming year. What does political involvement entail? At its core is developing legislative champions, which can be done in several ways. Through education and support, it is important to raise the profile of the industry with elected officials who are inclined to advocate for small businesses. All politics is local, and it is the constituent business owner who is key to reaching an elected official.

The first step is educating these individuals about the value PEOs bring to small businesses in their states. Elected officials enjoy and gain important insights by learning about businesses operating in their districts. Once the education process has been completed, it is important that these officials who now understand PEOs continue to serve in office. Supporting PEO industry champions can be done in several ways. The first and perhaps most obvious is through campaign contributions. Each state has different laws in this area, so it is critical that you understand the rules before making contributions.

Beyond direct campaign contributions, elected officials are always looking for individuals to help in various aspects of their campaigns. Simply asking candidates how you could assist in their campaigns is a great place to start. From significant roles in a campaign like serving as a finance chair to spending an afternoon handing out candidate information, any help provided to candidates is greatly appreciated.

Finally, the most direct way to become involved politically is to run for elected office. Many industries are well represented in legislative bodies across the country. Having individuals with direct in-depth knowledge of the PEO industry is exceedingly helpful.

Operating in a regulated industry has benefits and responsibilities. The PEO industry has done an outstanding job developing a culture that understands those responsibilities and pursues strategies to ensure successful outcomes. As with most critical undertakings, it is an ongoing task, and NAPEO is at the forefront to ensure the elements of a successful government affairs program are in place to advance important industry initiatives.

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