

Landscape Business Owner & Statesman Offers Six Steps For Political Involvement

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Every industry has to deal with the ups and downs of government regulation and landscape professionals are no different. The legislation passed on Capitol Hill affects every aspect of how you run your company, from taxes to hiring practices. Business owners intuitively know this, but getting involved

in the political process to make your voice heard can seem overwhelming from a distance, especially in our currently charged climate. If you only see the news or look at Twitter, [getting involved in politics](#) seems daunting and maybe even pointless.

As a state representative and landscape business owner, I have both a unique perspective and a vested interest in helping more landscapers get involved in the democratic process. Over the course of my seven-year tenure as a statesman, I've been approached by many professionals looking for ways to be heard. There is power in being involved, and I'm more than happy to help our industry find its collective voice in politics. I assure you, from my experience, that most lawmakers, regardless of political party, are good people just trying to help the people they represent.

I can't speak for every elected official, but I can offer some insights into the process and provide some ideas to help drive the kind of policy change we all want to see.

1. **Vote.** It may sound obvious, but you would be surprised how many people try to affect change without even being registered to vote. Ideally, professionals will have voted in at least the most recent election. However, if you haven't been voting, simply registering to do so signals you are serious about being involved in the electoral process.
2. **Know People & Policies.** You also need to take the time to look up who your representatives and senators are, and their background on the policies you're interested in. Don't assume if a politician is a member of one party or the other that you know their stance on every topic. House members, in particular, tend to align their policies largely with



the region they are from.

3. **Tell Your Story.** Stories are the lifeblood of any political movement, and for good reason. The most powerful way to explain problems is to associate them with real people. This takes an issue that might seem abstract and makes it concrete and easy to understand. Stories elevate a conversation from numbers and trends to a picture of what those impacts look like in someone's day-to-day life. The more individual stories you can bring to the attention of lawmakers, the better. However, stories need to be concise and easy to tell. Come prepared with the key points and emotions so you can tell your story in just a few minutes.
4. **Offer Solutions.** Politicians love to tackle problems they can solve. Approaching lawmakers with grievances but no ideas on how to make things better is a losing battle. Propel your stories along with options and a vision. Show your representatives exactly what needs to be done, and what the results will be. Zeroing in on solutions can also help move the

conversation beyond politics. Instead of getting caught up in blame or semantics, solutions focus on actionable principles, which are often less controversial.

5. **Build Relationships.** Most of the time, legislative issues are not easily solved in a single sitting. Keeping your representatives focused on the issues that matter to you, or your industry, will be a life-long process. Letters and petitions are a good place to start. Multiple points of contact are even better. Call field reps, attend town halls, and request meetings. It never hurts to work with a like-minded group or organization to show lawmakers how many constituents are affected by the problem. Build political relationships as you would any kind of relationship. Approach lawmakers with civility, logic, and calm. Heated arguments or insults are not productive and will probably get you shown the door.
6. **Think Local.** There is a massive focus on national politics in the U.S., when in reality, state, county, and city policies generally have just as big of an impact on lives and businesses. Zoning rules, [tree](#) size regulations, licensing, and building codes are all dealt with at a local level. Unemployment, worker's comp, water and soil treatment laws, and [approved pesticides](#) are all state issues. Spending all your energy on front page issues is only worth it if those issues are integral to your business. Diving into state and local policies is not only a great way to ease into activism, it's extremely important and often equally impactful to your bottom line.

Landscapers provide tangible benefits to the communities they serve. It makes sense for lawmakers to be interested in furthering policies that help to maintain and beautify communities. And every legislative district has landscaping companies in it. What we think—and how we vote—matters. Knowing how to approach politicians—with a clear plan, compelling story, and civil demeanor—is only half the battle. The rest of the equation is to get out there and get started.

[Representative Stratton](#) serves on the Utah House of Representatives. He is also the Co-Founder of [Stratton & Bra'tt Landscapes](#).

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