

Election Time – Meet the Candidates

By Jordan Lamb, DeWitt Ross & Stevens; WVMA Legislative Counsel

On November 6, 2012, Wisconsin voters will go to the polls to not only cast their votes for the next U.S. President, but also for state legislators from all 99 Wisconsin State Assembly seats and 16 Wisconsin State Senate seats. The WVMA is increasing its focus and attention on its government affairs program as issues that affect our members continue to increase in frequency and importance. We are committed to serving the membership through hard work and dedication as we represent your interests in the State Capital and before state agencies. However, as a part of that program, we encourage our members to take advantage of the opportunities that this election year presents.

Strong Grassroots Strengthens the Association. One of the core aspects of any successful government affairs program is the presence of a strong grassroots network. The connections that individuals have to their own local and state officials are the most valuable tool that the WVMA has to maintain constant and effective communication with state legislators.

It is part of the Association's goal to educate all legislators about the issues that affect our members. We do this by not only by having a physical presence in the Capital on a regular basis through our lobby team, but also by increasing the level of communication between our members and their legislators. Establishing relationships on a local level is critical when an issue arises.

Last session, there was one veterinarian in the Wisconsin State Legislature. There were also a handful of farmers who had knowledge of animal health issues. The remaining Wisconsin legislators are largely unfamiliar with issues that affect our members on a daily basis. And, it is our members who are uniquely qualified to help educate the members

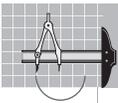
of the Wisconsin state legislature about issues that affect veterinary medical practice in Wisconsin.

Make the Connection. We urge all of our members to take the opportunity this fall to meet the candidates for elective office that will represent the district in which your business is located. If you find yourself invited to a candidate event, then please consider attending and introducing yourself. Take a moment to tell the candidate about your business, your employees and some of the daily challenges that you face.

You are an Expert – Share Your Knowledge. When the state government makes policy, the stakes are high and the issues are complex. Even with staff, researchers and lawyers as consultants, sometimes legislators and state agency staff are not fully equipped to understand the impact of proposed laws or rules on all affected parties. The WVMA lobby team will be there to fill that gap, but you are the only expert on your business. Share your knowledge with the lawmakers. They will appreciate your perspective and will look to you for insight as issues related to veterinary medicine arise.

Be a TRUSTED Resource. It may go without saying that everyone appreciates a trusted resource. The same is true in a government affairs context. What really matters is how good you are at helping members of the Legislature understand both the substance and politics of an issue. To that end, honesty is the key to excellent grassroots advocacy. Establishing yourself as a trusted resource is something that each WVMA member can do to enhance our government affairs program.

Thank you for your continued support of the WVMA government affairs program. Together, we can make a difference.



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