



Chapter 12: Government Relations



PR in government: everywhere you look

The practice of public relations is represented throughout government:

- In all government branches
- In all government agencies
- On state and local levels
- In the lobbying function
- ❖ Smart politicians recognize the importance of public relations in:
 - Getting themselves elected.
 - Gaining support for their programs.
 - Getting their policies adopted.



Public relations in government

- The growth of PR work with, and in, the government has exploded in recent years.
- The government is the largest single employer of public relations professionals.
- The field of government relations is a fertile one for PR graduates.
- Since the 1970s, more than 20 new federal regulatory agencies have sprung up.
- More than 120 agencies and programs now regulate business.
- The Department of Defense alone employs some 7,000 PR specialists.

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A quick history of PR in government

- The 1913 Gillette Amendment stated that appropriated funds may not be used to pay a publicity expert unless specifically appropriated for that purpose.
- Several years later, the Gag Law prohibited using any part of an appropriation for services, messages, or publications designed to influence any member of Congress in his attitude toward legislation or appropriations.
- Why can't they say "public relations"?
- As a result of those early congressional acts, and the president having too much persuasive power, today, no government worker may be employed in the practice of "public relations."
- However, they CAN be employed as public affairs officers, information officers, press secretaries, or communications specialists.

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Hierarchy of the U.S. Government

Federal

Legislative: representatives and senators

Executive: President, staff, cabinet, departments, commissions, agencies

State

Legislative: representatives and senators

Executive: governor, staff, cabinet, departments, commissions, agencies

County

Executive

County officials, commissions, and departments

City

Mayor or city manager

City council, officials, commissions, and departments



Government practitioners

Perhaps consumer activist Ralph Nader said it best:

“In this nation, where the ultimate power is said to rest with the people, it is clear that a free and prompt flow of information from government to the people is essential.”



Government relations objectives

- To improve communications with government personnel and agencies
- To monitor legislators and regulatory agencies in an area that does and could affect constituent operations
- To legitimately influence legislation which affects the economy of the organization or its area
- To encourage constituent participation at all governmental levels
- To enhance awareness and understanding among lawmakers about operations and activities of constituent organizations



The State Department

Is responsible for:

- Press briefings
 - Maintaining the Secretary of State homepage content
 - Operating foreign press centers
 - Managing public diplomacy operations abroad
- ❖ Operates the United States Information Agency or USIA.
- Its purpose is to support the national interest by conveying and understanding abroad of what the U.S. stands for.

The USIA also works to:

- Build the intellectual and institutional foundations of democracy in societies around the globe.
- Support the war on drugs in producer and consumer countries.
- Develop worldwide informational programs to address environmental challenges.
- Bring truth to any society that fails to exercise free and open communication.



The State Department and USIA.....

The USIA uses these communication tools to spread the “gospel of America:”

- Radio
- Film and Television
- Internet
- Media
- Publications
- Exhibitions
- Libraries and Books
- Education

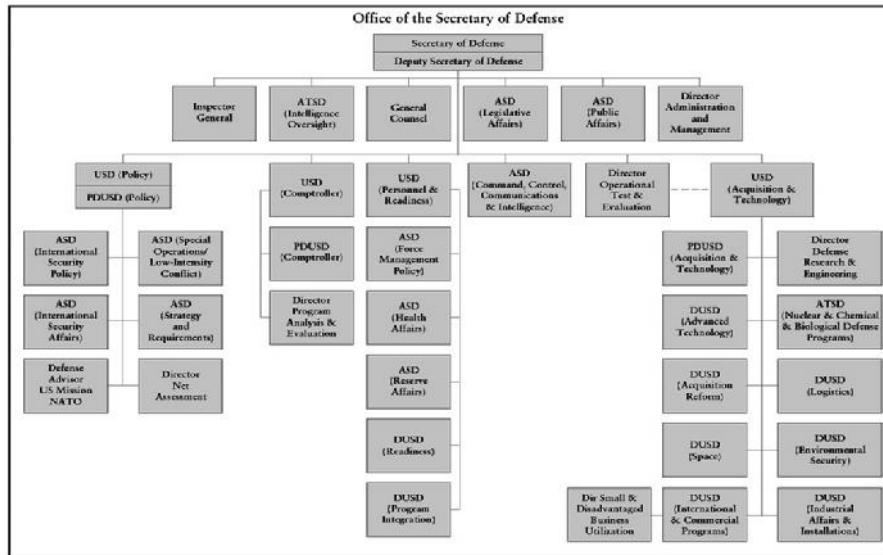


The Department of Defense (DOD)

- The DOD’s public affairs network is massive, employing several thousand military communicators.
- The DOD encompasses 3 million active duty forces, reserves, and civilian employees.
- Its Public Affairs department is headed by the assistant secretary of defense.
- The DOD maintains Armed Forces Radio & TV Service, Stars and Stripes newspaper, and other media.



Fig. 13-2 DOD public relations organization



Other government agencies

❖ Federal departments and regulatory agencies use public relations to provide information, track fraudulent practices, and other related activities.

To name a few:

- The Department of Health and Human Services
- The Department of Agriculture
- The Department of the Treasury
- The Central Intelligence Agency



The President

- The president wields massive public relations clout. He/she controls the “bully pulpit,” and much of the nation’s agenda.
- The presidential press secretary provides the White House press corps with announcements and daily press briefings.
- ❖ The President’s Press Secretary
 - Some have called this job the second-most difficult position in the administration.
 - The press secretary is the chief public PR spokesperson for the administration.
 - Most come from public relations careers, rather than journalism careers.

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What do lobbyists do?

- Lobbyists work to influence legislation—either by speeding it up or slowing it down.
- Lobbyists inform, persuade, make contacts, and are always ready with the right information.
- Specific activities include:
 - Fact-finding
 - Interpretation of government and company actions
 - Advocacy of a position
 - Publicity springboard
 - Support of sales

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What is required of a lobbyist?

- To know one's way around the complex channels of government at all levels.
- To know all aspects of one's business; to be armed with facts and figures for legislators.
- To know about important laws:
 - The Federal Lobbying Act of 1946
 - The Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995

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Lobbying the government

- Businesses and organizations of all kinds are working hard to influence the government. That's why they hire lobbyists.
- Lobbying is one of the nation's greatest growth industries. Nearly 35,000 are now registered in Washington, more than twice the amount registered in 2000.
- Lobbying is big business. Around \$2 billion per year—or \$6 million per day—is spent lobbying the federal government.

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Emergence of e-lobbying

- The Internet has heavily impacted lobbying.
- The Bush-Gore 2000 presidential election established the Web in political campaigns.
- Political movements at all levels now utilize the Internet to inform voters and influence legislators.

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Political action committees (PACs)

- PACs give groups a voice in selecting their representatives.
- Nearly 4,000 PACs contribute more than \$60 million annually to campaigns.
- The four largest PACs are:
 - 1.) U.S. Realtors, \$2.5 million
 - 2.) Trial Lawyers, \$2.4 million
 - 3.) State, county, and municipal employees, \$2.4 million
 - 4.) American Medical Association, \$2.3 million
- PACs have drawn criticism for their influence and funding of elections.

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Dealing with local government

- Dealing with local government is different than working at the federal level.
- Opinion leaders are key. These may include labor union leaders, teachers, and civil service workers.
- Forums, debates, media interviews, and direct contact are necessary to keep the public informed and communication lines open.
- Local and state government offices are excellent employment avenues for entry-level PR professionals.

❖ Review Question:

1. Explain the importance of public relations in government.
2. List various objectives effective government relations operations should set.