

## **ESTABLISHING A RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR LEGISLATOR**

Essential to establishing a good relationship with your legislator is gaining the respect and confidence of the staff. Courtesy and a friendly smile can go a long way to opening doors for you. Realize that many of the calls made to the staff people are from unhappy constituents with problems or complaints, so your positive attitude will be well received.

You should have two principles in mind at the start of this effort to build a relationship: value and trust. The Senator or Representative must realize that you will become a valuable source of help, both politically and educationally. Tell him/her that you want to help with fund raising and campaigning as needed. Make them recognize your value as a source of information to help educate them on aviation issues they will need to understand in the future. You must strive to earn their trust by never exaggerating or misrepresenting the facts. Following through on promises and commitments will also help establish a relationship of trust. Remember, especially due to term limits, they must have trusted resource people to advise them on a myriad of issues, and you are helping to fill that need by making yourself available as a source for answers.

Although you should show courtesy and respect, be careful not to appear to be awed or intimidated when speaking to a legislator. They are ordinary people doing an important job as public servants; so don't be afraid of them. Once you have established a friendly association, it will be rewarding to both of you. Unfriendly people don't usually win elections, so you will be surprised at how easy it is to get to know your Senator or Representative. You may even acquire a good friend!

Continue to build the relationship by asking what you can do to help at least once a month. Try not to ask for help with your own issues until you feel confident that you have a good rapport with your legislator and have backed up your offer to help him or her. Although it may take a full election cycle to establish a strong rapport, the reward will be the personal satisfaction of knowing you are a trusted advisor and friend.