

NATCA's Practical Guide to Attending Political Fundraisers

The political fundraiser is one of NATCA's best tools in the relationship building process. While a meeting on Capital Hill might allow thirty minutes with the transportation staffer, a well-attended fundraiser might allow two hours of continuous interaction with numerous Representatives and their staff. At a fundraiser, we are allowed to connect on a more personal level and make a lasting impression (hopefully not bad) with our decision makers. In order to represent NATCA successfully, there are some practical guidelines to follow to ensure that your time is well spent. Based upon law, ethics, and common sense, the following dos and don'ts will help maximize your impact when attending fundraising events.

Do

- **Introduce yourself as an air traffic controller (or other safety related occupation).** People are generally fascinated with our profession and we should use this to our advantage to communicate our issues.
- **Dress appropriately.** Remember that you represent NATCA and that the impression you make will directly reflect on the organization. A good time to ask about the event attire is when you RSVP to the event.
- **Attend with other NATCA members.** This is a good time to introduce novices to the political process and jump-start them into legislative activism for NATCA.
- **Treat the fundraiser primarily as a social function.** Take advantage of this setting to get to know your legislator better. If you went to the same school or church, have kids on the same teams, etc., mention the connection to help the legislator more easily remember you.
- **Your homework before you go.** If a legislator or their staff member asks what issues are important to the NATCA, be prepared to respond in a brief, concise manner. Know your issue. Your regional legislative committee chair can provide background information on the legislator and a brief synopsis of issues being advocated by NATCA at your request.
- **Act in a manner that reflects positively on NATCA.** It takes a special kind of person to be a controller; sometimes it is best to keep our uniqueness suppressed so that others don't misinterpret our character.
- **Understand all sides of an issue.** To speak intelligently about an issue, you must be able to counter your opponents' arguments if necessary.
- **Keep your comments brief.** You won't get much time. Know when to end your comments. Remember, fundraisers are for showing support for the legislator.
- **Mingle with others at the event.** This is an excellent opportunity to build networks. This is also a great opportunity to build your relationships with staff.
- **Follow through with any request that a legislator makes in a timely manner.** If you are unable to meet the request, let the legislator know why.
- **Extend an invitation to visit an air traffic control facility.** Find out what airport is used primarily for travel and coordinate with the Fac Rep to ensure that everyone has the proper contact information. Have the Fac Rep send a follow up email invitation shortly after the event.
- **Remember to say thanks!** Send or e-mail a short thank-you after the event. It is a great way to reinforce your relationship, send follow-up information, and it also lets the legislator know you enjoyed attending the event.

Don't

- **Attempt to threaten or bribe legislators** - Even through insinuation. Promises to vote for or contribute to a legislator's opponent will only ensure that he or she will not support NATCA on the issue at hand -- or any other issue.
- **Overindulge!** The fundraiser is a pseudo-social event, but it is not a party or a buffet. Limit your alcohol consumption.