Ten Things Legislative Staff Hate to Hear

1. ***But I thought my appointment was with the Senator!***
   Never indicate that you are disappointed to be meeting with a staff person. Remember, having a relationship with staff can make or break your case.
2. ***Here's some reading material for you – our 300 page annual report.***
   When meeting with elected officials, try to limit your leave behind materials to one or two pages, and include details of where additional information may be found.
3. ***How much of a campaign contribution did your boss get to vote against (or for) this bill?***
   Believe it or not, most staff have no idea who contributed to their boss' campaigns. Not only is this question insulting, the staff person isn't likely to know the answer anyway.
4. ***I assume that you know about SB 1234.***
   With hundreds or even thousands of bills being introduced each session, no staff person will be able to keep all of them straight. Always provide them with the bill title, number, and general provisions.
5. ***No, I don't have an appointment, but I promise I'll only take half an hour of your time.***
   Unless it is an emergency or you are a close friend with the staff person, try to avoid the dreaded "stop by." Most staff are happy to arrange an appointment if you are relevant to the office (i.e. you are a constituent). And even if you have an appointment, never assume you will be granted half an hour!
6. ***I don't really need anything specific.***
   You need to have a reason to make the appointment. You would be unsettled if someone made an appointment with you and didn't require a surgical consultation. Don't schedule a meeting with a legislator unless you need help with legislation.
7. ***We have ten (or more) people in our group.***
   Legislative offices are small. If you have more than four of five people in your group, you'll be standing in a hallway. Plus, including too many people may dilute your message by forcing the legislator or staff to focus on crowd control rather than your issue.
8. ***What you're telling me can't be right. I heard [talk show host] say otherwise.***
   Most staff members or elected officials won't lie to you. They know that lying will get them into a lot of trouble. They may see things differently than you do, but if they say a bill is definitely not going to be heard on the floor, or there is no such legislation...believe them.
9. ***What do you mean we have to stand in the hall?***
   A request to stand in the hall is simply a function of meeting space limitations. Nothing else.
10. ***No, I don't represent anyone from your district. I just thought you'd be interested in what I have to say.***
    Members are elected to represent their constituents. Period. If you are not their constituent, you are not relevant to them. Your time is always best spent working with your own elected officials and turning them into surgical advocates.