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Contact:

Christy Talbot

Phone: 240-235-0277

Email: ctalbot@columbiabooks.com

Citizens Not Satisfied with Their Interactions with Congress: New Book Offers a Solution

Bethesda, Md. (March 2, 2009) - A survey by the Congressional Management Foundation found that almost ½ of Americans contacted a U.S. representative in the five years between 2000 and 2005, but only about two-thirds remembered even getting a response and, of those who did, most were dissatisfied.

These numbers are troubling in light of the current trend in D.C. and around the country toward citizen involvement in policymaking. But a new book by former Congressional staffer and “Advocacy Guru” Stephanie Vance offers a solution. *Citizens in Action: A Guide to Influencing Government* shows citizens how they can be part of this process by effectively advocating for the causes they believe in.

“The 2008 elections confirmed what has been brewing around the country for a while: citizens want to be involved in the policy decisions that impact their work and daily lives,” observed Vance. “But they’re frustrated with the process and disappointed by past and recent examples of political corruption and greed. Without apologizing for the many ridiculous things that go on in DC and in state capitols around the country, I want advocates to know they *can* make a difference without resorting to underhanded tricks.”

Armed with the practical and down-to-earth tools and techniques in this book – developed by the author through years of experience as a lobbyist and elected officials’ aide – citizen advocates will learn the ins-and-outs of getting what they want out of their elected leaders.

“Believe it or not, it is possible for citizens to get heard by their government without making a big campaign contribution. They just need to know how to use their amazing power of constituency to their advantage,” stated Vance, a nationally known speaker and trainer on the topic of effective advocacy.

Through *Citizens in Action*, readers will discover:

- The factors that influence elected officials – beyond the cash
- Citizens’ “power of constituency” and how to utilize it effectively

- The four keys to effective advocacy, including: knowing what you want; who you're talking to; how to talk to them; and, how to follow-up
- The top 10 things elected officials and their staff HATE to hear
- The one thing that ALWAYS works in effective advocacy (shh... it's a secret)

“*Citizens in Action* shares the secrets of how to get things done in any policymaking environment,” stated Joel Poznansky, President of Columbia Books. “As such, we believe that anyone involved with or leading an advocacy campaign will find value in this publication, and we're proud to be associated with a volume that matches so well with our mission to provide resources to the lobbying community.”

Citizens in Action is a companion volume to *The Advocacy Manual: A Practitioner's Guide to Achieving Policy Goals Through Organization Networks*. Targeted toward those leading advocacy campaigns, whether at associations, corporations or as part of the general public, this guide offers a step-by-step process for building, communicating with and activating an advocacy network.

About the Author

With 20 years of experience in Washington, DC Stephanie Vance, known nationally and internationally as the Advocacy Guru, knows the insider's secrets to influencing government. She has worked at a prominent DC law firm, as a lobbyist for National Public Radio and as a Congressional aide, holding positions as Legislative Director and Staff Director for three different members of Congress. She is the author of *Government by the People: How to Communicate with Congress* and the fabjob.com guide *Get a Job on Capitol Hill*.

Stephanie's work stems from a deep and abiding belief that the US system of government is effective only when citizens are active and well-informed participants. She helps citizens across the country take action through her speeches and training sessions for groups both small and large, including nationally recognized organizations like the American Library Association and the Humane Society of the United States. Her message has been heard by tens of thousands of advocates across the country and around the world many of whom are making the world a better place (at least in their view) through the application of her advice.

Ms. Vance holds a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science as well as two Master's degrees, one in Legislative Affairs from George Washington University and the other in Liberal Studies from Georgetown University (this is not the study of how to be a liberal). A member of the National Speakers Association, she recently earned the NSA's prestigious Certified Speaking Professional designation. She is also a member of the American Society of Association Executives, Women in Government Relations and is mentioned in Who's Who in American Women.

About the Publisher

For more than 40 years Columbia Books & Information Services has provided users with information on the associations, government relations, lobbying and public relations communities. As a publisher of print directories, online databases, mailing lists, and audioconferences we have extensive experience capturing and delivering relevant and accurate information on the above topics in easy-to-use formats. Whether you are interested in lobbyists and their clients, associations and their executives, or public affairs professionals we have a resource that will fit your needs.

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