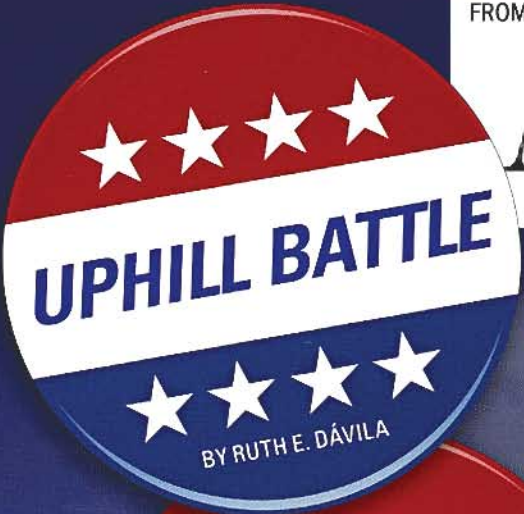


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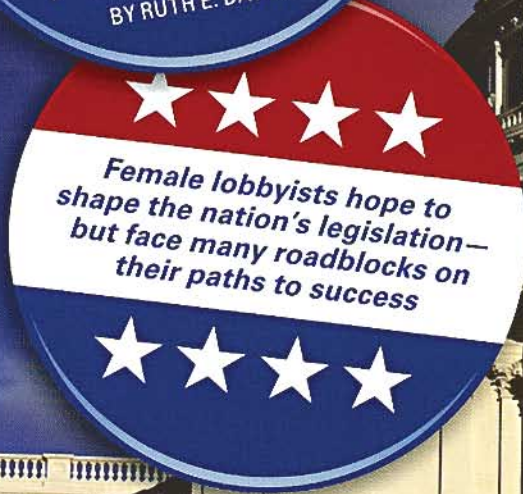
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BY RUTH E. DÁVILA



Human Rights First's President and CEO Elisa Massimino profiled

Sharp lobbyists make different people. "Different things are very into security issues in some members, others are into job creation. It's their district. Others are into their interests," Antelo says. Important to know their interests with shaping the advocates are also tasked with shaping the debate and galvanizing support. "It takes a critical mass of people who are willing to make a priority and raise the profile to pass legislation or change administration policy," says Elisa Massimino, president and CEO of Human Rights First, a Washington, DC-based non-profit organization.

Mobilizing the public is Monica Miller's forte. Swaying legislators requires a robust group of citizen advocates, she says, as well as knowing the right time to "pull the trigger to have calls or letters come in to that particular office to say: we want you to vote yes or no on that bill."

ONE WOMAN'S SUCCESS

To succeed, lobbyists must build research-based arguments, cultivate relationships with legislators, and persevere—even if it takes years, even decades, to move a bill. "Thousands of bills are introduced every Congress session, but very few of them get voted on-let alone pass," says Massimino, who lobbies for human rights issues, including refugees, mass atrocities, discrimination, and counterterrorism. "You can have terrific legislation and a willing member of Congress who wants to move it, but if there is no momentum, it doesn't matter," she adds.



CAN I GET A WITNESS?

In April 2010, Elisa Massimino (above) testified to the House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs International Organizations subcommittee. The subject of the hearing was "Combating Anti-Semitism, Protecting Human Rights."

DELIVERING THE MESSAGE

Lobbyist Anna Aurilio (left) talks with EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson. Aurilio sees herself as an advocate for public health and safety.



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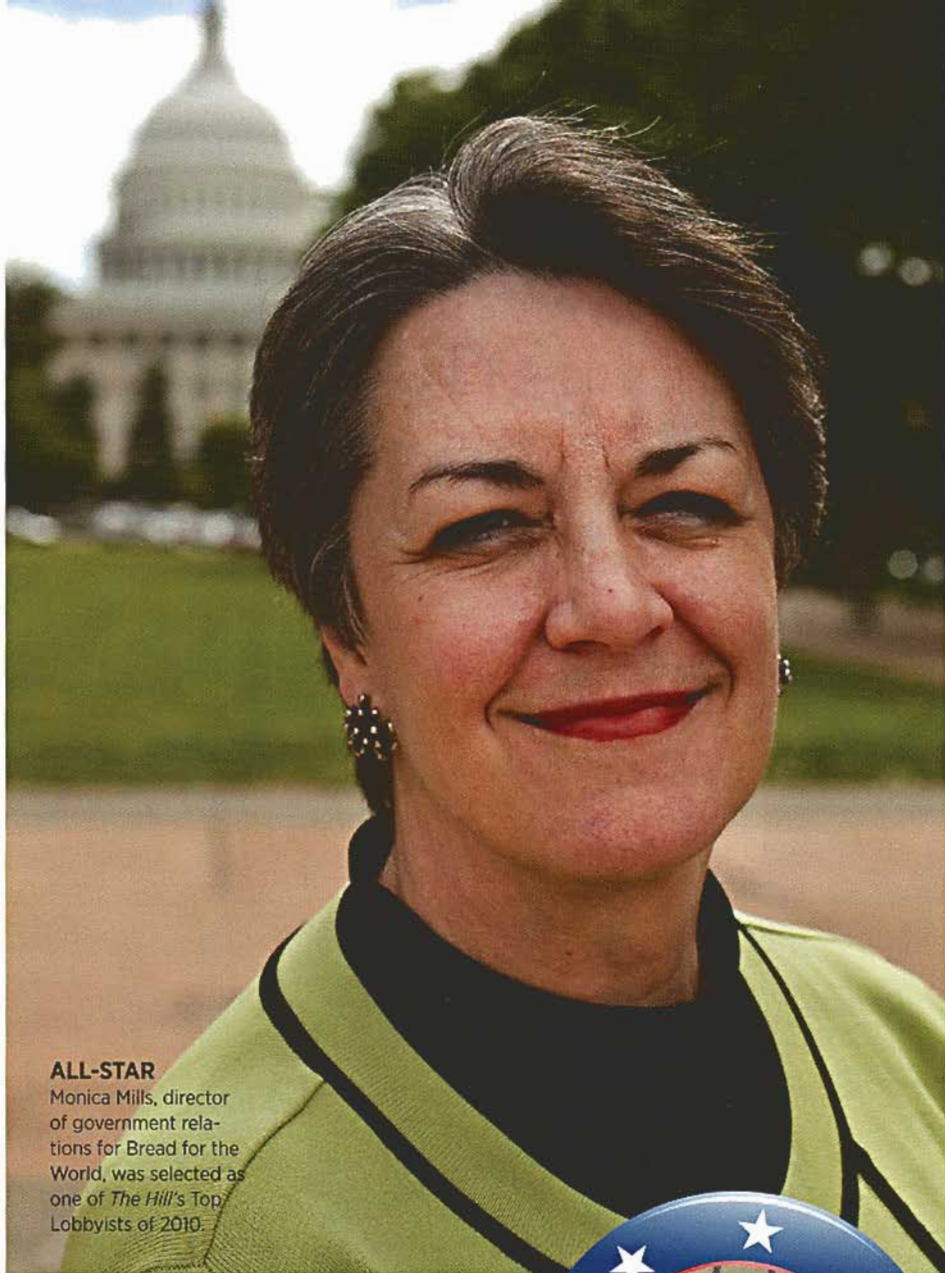
Lobbying is a tough job, but those looking to sway public officials and influence legislation know that it needs to be done—and increasingly, it's done by women. In her 2007 book *The Best Kept Secret: Women Corporate Lobbyists, Policy & Power in the United States*, author Denise Benoit Scott writes that half of lobbyists at the state level are female, and a third of lobbyists in Washington are women.

Though many women are successfully lobbying (and influencing) government officials, they face a litany of challenges, including gender bias and the stigma attached to being a special-interest group. For example, President Obama, in his 2010 State of the Union address, promised to minimize the influence of lobbyists—an announcement that is discouraging to those who are lobbying for a cause.

What's more, it is difficult for lobbyists of any stripe to get their messages heard. Even if a lobbyist can recite talking points in her sleep, getting an audience with a member of Congress—or, more likely, a member's staff—is no small feat. Those able to overcome these challenges say the reward is worth the hard work, because they get to change the world.



MONICA MILLS
DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS,
BREAD FOR THE WORLD



ALL-STAR

Monica Mills, director of government relations for Bread for the World, was selected as one of *The Hill's* Top Lobbyists of 2010.

DELIVERING THE MESSAGE

Monica Mills, a top public advocate, has worked in numerous facets of politics since 1982—and she understands how hard it can be to make initial contact with legislators. “When I first started, my job was to knock on the door,” Mills recalls. “You try to meet with any staff person who will meet with you—and in particular those who are paying attention to that issue for the member of Congress.”

Today, Mills serves as director of government relations for Bread for the World, a faith-based nonprofit, located in Washington, DC, that's fighting to end hunger. Mills works closely with staffers in congressional offices, and heads a lobbying team that works for individual members of Congress on a daily basis. She often attends meetings at venues like the White House and the Office of the Speaker of the House of Representatives.



CRISTINA ANTELO
PRINCIPAL, PODESTA GROUP

According to Cristina Antelo, principal of the Podesta Group, a leading government relations firm based in Washington, DC, it's important to offer legislators many perspectives. “There are just too many issues, and every issue has six sides, and no member of Congress can keep up with all of them,” says Antelo, who

represents clients in industries as varied as transportation, technology, and alcohol. "I make sure I say: here's the issue, here's what I think you should do, and why. Now here's the other side, and this is why I disagree."

Sharp lobbyists tailor their case to the target. "Different things make different people tick. Some members are very into security issues in their district. Others are into job creation. It's important to know their interests," Antelo says.

Advocates are also tasked with shaping the debate and galvanizing support. "It takes a critical mass of people who are willing to make it a priority and raise the profile to pass legislation or change administration policy," says Elisa Massimino, president and CEO of Human Rights First, a Washington, DC-based nonprofit organization.

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Party of ONE

Small-business owners can—and should—lobby on their own behalf. Many entrepreneurs feel helpless to combat the moves of local and state government, even if laws or ordinances—such as parking bans or zoning requirements—directly (and negatively) affect their business. Connecting with local and state officials is a good way to get your voice heard. Amy Handlin, a marketing professor at Monmouth University, deputy minority leader of the New Jersey General Assembly, and author of *Be Your Own Lobbyist: How to Give Your Small Business Big Clout with State and Local Government* (Praeger, 2010), shares these tips for beginners.

- 1 RESEARCH POTENTIAL TARGETS.** Save time and frustration by learning who is best—and most likely—to help with your problem.
- 2 CONNECT INFORMALLY WITH LOCAL OFFICIALS.** Build casual relationships with powerful people (when you don't need their help) by introducing yourself at community events and public meetings.
- 3 FRAME YOUR NEEDS WISELY,** in terms of broad community interests. Is your storefront located on a side street with inadequate lighting compared to your town's Main Street? Your request is a matter of public safety for all shoppers, not just profit for your store.
- 4 DON'T RELY ON ONE COMMUNICATION TOOL.** Convey your message in writing, over the phone, face to face, and through the media.
- 5 DON'T GET EMOTIONAL.** It might make you feel better to shoot off a hostile e-mail or yell at someone from City Hall. But venting won't change anyone's mind—it will just brand you as an amateur.
- 6 DON'T BE INTIMIDATED** by the trappings of power. Forget the big offices, gold domes, fancy titles. As a taxpayer, you have a right to be heard and taken seriously.

OPPOSING FORCES

Washington insiders are often skeptical of lobbyists; in his 2010 State of the Union address, President Obama vowed to minimize their influence.



MARIE SYLLA-DIXON
DIRECTOR OF FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE
AFFAIRS, T-MOBILE USA

With hard work, persistence, and luck, lobbying can lead to success. For example, in 2005, Massimino's campaign to stop torture caught the attention of Senator John McCain, who spent five years as a political prisoner during the Vietnam War. "When we were in the midst of a big fight about what America stands for in terms of how it treats people in its custody, I worked very closely with Senator McCain's office to help draft legislation to

end torture, something he cared very deeply about," Massimino says.

Massimino's efforts resulted in the Detainee Treatment Act of 2005, which bans inhumane treatment of prisoners and regulates military interrogations. This victory, and further lobbying by Massimino and her allies, led to President Obama's 2009 decision to shut down the Central Intelligence Agency's secret interrogation program.

ADVOCATING FOR GOOD

For lobbyists like Massimino, advocacy is more than a job—it's a vocation. Corporate lobbyists often get a bad rap for representing capitalistic ventures, but in reality, companies increasingly link their legislative agendas to social responsibility platforms.

For example, Kraft Foods, the largest food company in North America—and manufacturer of brands like Nabisco, Oscar Mayer, Philadelphia, the Kraft label, and more—devotes many of its lobbying resources to its

health and wellness programs.

Tami Jackson Buckner, director of Kraft's federal government affairs, promotes nutritional food labeling that empowers consumers to build healthy diets. She helps members of Congress understand the science and research data when deciding whether to ban particular ingredients. She also promotes Kraft's strides in responsible marketing to children and to encourage voluntary industry regulation. In fact, Kraft Foods adheres to strict ethical standards: no ads are directed at children under 6 years old, and only "better-for-you" products are advertised to kids between 6 and 11.

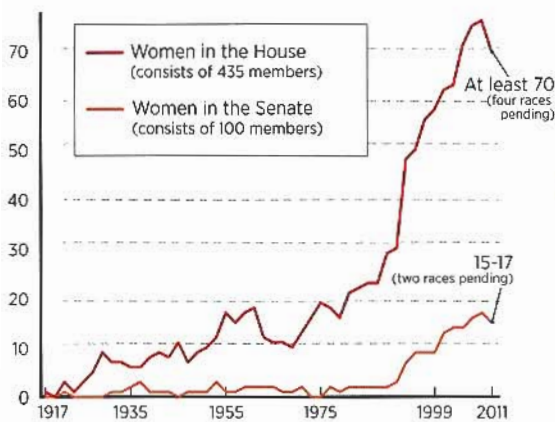
Marie Sylla-Dixon, director of federal legislative affairs for T-Mobile USA, primarily lobbies for more "spectrum," which enables greater wireless broadband for voice and data transfer. She also fights the excessive taxes consumers pay for wireless services. According to the CTIA-The Wireless Association, these taxes, on average, are double those imposed on general goods and services. "In this economy, the last thing our consumers need is more money being taken out of their pockets," Sylla-Dixon says.

Others are compelled to advance personal passions. For example, Anna Aurilio, director of the Washington, DC office of Environment America, was drawn to lobbying after witnessing environmental crimes while growing

MASSIMINO'S EFFORTS RESULTED IN THE DETAINEE TREATMENT ACT OF 2005, AND FURTHER LOBBYING LED TO PRESIDENT OBAMA'S 2009 DECISION TO SHUT DOWN THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY'S SECRET INTERROGATION PROGRAM.

Women in Congress

In the November 2010 midterm elections, women lost seats for the first time since the 1978 election, making the message of The 2012 Project more urgent than ever. The shift in power also marked the end of Nancy Pelosi's four-year-stint as the first female Speaker of the House (Pelosi holds the record of highest-ranking elected woman in US history).



Source: Center for American Women and Politics

Women in Top US Political Positions

Governors: 6 (3%)
 State Senators: 17 (17%)
 State Representatives: 73 (16.8%)
 Mayors of 100 Largest Cities: 7 (7%)

up in Woburn, Massachusetts. The town's severe pollution problems inspired both Jonathan Harr's 1996 book *A Civil Action*, and the eponymous 1998 film starring John Travolta.

"When I was in high school, we learned that local companies had been telling employees to dump toxic chemicals out back, behind their buildings," Aurilio says. "On the other side of the companies' chain-link fence was our municipal drinking water. Many kids got sick, and some died of leukemia."

Hoping to fight other environmental injustices, Aurilio went on to earn a bachelor's degree in physics and a master's in environmental engineering, and joined Environment America. "It is important for the country and the environment that there are people like me and my colleagues who are watching out for the air we breathe, the water we drink, the

treasured landscapes and rivers and bays."

After law school, Massimino lent pro bono legal services to a community from El Salvador. She helped her clients gain refugee status and deal with abusive employers. "I had accidentally found my calling," she says.

Mills is motivated, in part, by past hardships. "The fact that my family was on food stamps at one point has made me a better lobbyist," she says.

Even corporate lobbyists find ways to promote causes close to their heart. Buckner, whose brother suffered from childhood obesity, aspires to put Kraft Foods "on the forefront of helping to solve a growing obesity epidemic." And Antelo, whose mother had multiple sclerosis, continually seeking ways to align clients with the Multiple Sclerosis Society.

More than 80 percent of senators are male, and though a growing number of female lobbyists are working behind the scenes to shape legislation, staffers at The 2012 Project hope to see more women holding political office. According to Debbie Walsh, director of Rutgers University's Center for American Women and Politics, the number of women serving on US legislative bodies has flat-lined, after a spike in 1992. In 2006, disconcerted by the trend, the CAWP convened a meeting with scholars and activists. There, political strategist Mary Hughes conceptualized The 2012 Project, which aims to "open the floodgates" to women candidates. "Research shows that women don't think about running for office until someone asks them," says Debbie Walsh, the CAWP's director. "So, we're asking you to step up." If you're not at the table, Walsh adds, you're probably on the menu. As a redistricting year, 2012 offers new seats and hope for new candidates.

THE IDEAL CANDIDATES

Successful women more than 45 years old, with experience in fields underrepresented in government (such as small business, science, technology, international affairs, and health care).

THE RESOURCES

Former female politicians and The 2012 Project staff will recruit women at some 200 industry conferences as well as via online forums, blogs, and social networking. Interested women will be matched to resources such as training and political action committees, to guide their campaign.

THE MESSAGE

"You've been a glass-ceiling breaker in your profession," Walsh says. "Now is your chance to take your skills and accomplishments to public office. It's an incredibly fulfilling experience where you get to really see the ways in which you can make changes in your community, state, and world government."



ANNA AURILIO
 DIRECTOR, ENVIRONMENT AMERICA

THE BLAME GAME

Lobbyists are often used as scapegoats for the political system's ailments. The media perpetuates an image of the "evil lobbyist" by oversimplifying issues, Antelo says. "Now, as soon

as you say 'special-interest group,' there's an automatic negative connotation, when most issues are just not that simple. We're easy targets, because [attacking lobbyists makes for] an easy sound bite."

Even President Obama, in his 2010 State of the Union address, pledged to ban lobbyists from "policy-making jobs or seats on federal boards and commissions."

Obama's measures target corrupt lobbyists like Jack Abramoff who, along with a few others, were busted on a slew of violations in 2005: grossly overbilling Native American casino clients (for an estimated \$85 million, according to *The Boston Globe*); planning counter-lobbying against clients' interests to rack up more lobbying work for themselves; and buying congressional votes with illegal gifts.

Extreme examples of unethical lobbyists like Abramoff are blown up in the news, undercutting lobbyists who play by the rules.

For Aurilio, the economic power of some puts an inaccurate spin on public interest advocates. "My base of power is not money—it's people, and being on the right side of issues."

The field isn't without gender bias and, according to Benoit Scott, attractive female lobbyists are sometimes regarded with suspicion. "If lobbyists are feminine, pretty, and blond, their motives are questioned and their behaviors attributed to something other than just doing their jobs," she says.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

A few decades ago, female lobbyists began forming women-only networks to share career advice and policy information—and the tradition persists. Some meet in informal gatherings. Others join lobbying groups, like

"IF LOBBYISTS ARE FEMININE, PRETTY, AND BLOND, THEIR MOTIVES ARE QUESTIONED."

Denise Benoit Scott, Author

Women in Government Relations, Inc., and industry associations, such as the Women's High-Tech Coalition.

"While much has changed since the 1980s, women in Washington still have a tough time being taken seriously and receiving the credit they deserve in male-dominated environments," Benoit Scott says.

Those who lobby in areas with scant female counterparts—like Aurilio, a scientist, and Antelo, who worked on the male-dominated



FACE TO FACE

Monica Mills is skilled at securing face time with politicians; she's even scored meetings at the White House.

trading floor of Goldman Sachs before specializing in tax and financial services lobbying—claim that gender challenges make them more assertive, rather than disadvantaged.

On the whole, women are changing the nature of the business. Benoit Scott says that breakfasts and luncheons now supersede evening fundraisers as a primary vehicle to connect with officials, largely due to women's need for a more healthful work-life balance.

As opposed to their male peers, who gather for aggressive activities like tennis or golf competitions, Benoit Scott says women lobbyists tend to create circles of connectedness. "I love mentoring young women on Capitol Hill and in the lobbying profession," Buckner says. "Since the beginning of my career, I've been very fortunate to have support and guidance from all sides of the political spectrum."

Minority groups band together for solidarity. Jackson Buckner and Sylla-Dixon promote the profession in the black community. "If there's a new female lobbyist, especially a woman of color, I believe it's my obligation to promote her success. I've enjoyed hosting dinner parties and afternoon teas for women to help expand their network and knowledge base," Buckner says.

Sylla-Dixon says such support systems bolster minorities in the field. "There are not enough women, African Americans or minorities heading up DC (lobbying) offices, but there are a lot more black lobbyists than in 1998, when I started."

Antelo, an officer of the Hispanic Lobbyists Association, champions Latinos in politics. She plugs the Congressional Hispanic Caucus to her clients, to try to increase its visibility. "I



TAMI JACKSON BUCKNER
DIRECTOR OF FEDERAL GOVERNMENTAL
AFFAIRS, KRAFT FOODS

want Hispanic voters, members of Congress, staffers, and lobbyists to count. Anything that helps one helps the other," Antelo says.

Reaching across party lines, industries, and interests is the only way to accomplish anything, Mills adds. To tackle big problems, lobbyists seek coalitions with nongovernmental organizations, community groups, firms, and trade associations.

Aurilio participated in a major left-right alliance, the Green Scissors coalition, to cut billions of dollars from "fiscally wasteful and environmentally harmful" government spending in the 1990s. Massimino collaborated with retired military leaders to end US torture in 2005. In 2010, Mills, representing faith groups, and Buckner, representing Kraft Foods, worked on the recent Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act to ensure that schools provide quality, healthy meals.

In the end, Massimino says, everyone has a stake in legislation. "If you're not engaged on issues you care about, other voices will prevail. And it's not just [professional lobbyists]—we can all make a difference." **1**