What is grassroots advocacy? It can be defined as an organization’s membership directly reaching out to its respective elected officials in support of or in opposition to a given policy. Unlike traditional lobbying, grassroots advocacy is outreach that comes directly from the constituents represented by elected officials.

At NRCA, we are building a grassroots advocacy team of contractors, distributors, manufacturers and affiliates from across the U.S. in support of common industry interests. By using traditional forms of lobbying combined with a grassroots advocacy component, NRCA’s political presence will become stronger and its impact more widespread.

NRCA’s strategic vision

Working with an already strong lobbying effort on Capitol Hill and a growing ROOFPAC, NRCA’s grassroots efforts will take advocacy to the next level, further amplifying the roofing industry’s collective voice in Washington, D.C. NRCA’s strategic grassroots plan was designed with two key components in mind: an advocacy platform that can be used efficiently and effectively by advocates in our industry and an initiative that will assist NRCA members with strengthening relationships with elected officials.

When lobbying Congress regarding issues affecting the roofing industry, NRCA often receives feedback from representatives and senators explaining they want to hear directly from constituents, and they inquire whether NRCA has members in their respective districts or states. With your help, NRCA can greater affect policy. ROOFPAC’s role is “to help protect you and your business from legislation and regulations that could harm your bottom line.” The same can be said about your involvement in the policymaking process through participation in NRCA grassroots initiatives. What happens in Washington, D.C., affects your business—it can make it more difficult to earn a living or promote an environment for your business to flourish. NRCA needs your help to ensure the latter outcome. Whether NRCA is on the offense or defense regarding issues, Congress needs to hear from an engaged electorate, and that includes NRCA members.

NRCA is working to build stronger relationships with members of Congress, and your participation in the strategic grassroots advocacy plan is critical to the success of your business.

The advocacy platform

Under the direction of NRCA’s Government Relations Committee, in fall 2016, NRCA set out to build an online grassroots platform that would allow members to communicate with their members of Congress directly. In January, this vision came to fruition with the NRCA Grassroots Advocacy Network.

The NRCA Grassroots Advocacy Network makes it possible for you to easily engage your elected officials. The new grassroots website, roofingadvocacy.nrca.net, is a great addition to NRCA’s already strong repertoire of tools used by its government affairs team, including support of candidates through ROOFPAC, participation in coalitions, traditional advocacy on Capitol Hill and outreach to federal agencies. This component of the strategic vision will make NRCA’s advocacy efforts stronger, but it only will happen with your participation.

While visiting the website, you can take action quickly—even from your mobile device. Many NRCA members already have reached out to their members of Congress regarding the Regulatory Accountability Act using the NRCA Grassroots Advocacy Network. Following are highlights of the advocacy website.

Become a key contact

Using this tool, you will be able to inform NRCA of any relationships you already may have with legislators. Perhaps you have installed a roof system on your representative’s home or went to school with one of your senators. This information is helpful and used by NRCA’s government affairs team to chart relationships NRCA members have with members of Congress to better decide the best approaches for communication.

Take action

The “take action” tool makes it easy for you to email members of Congress from your computer or mobile device. When you receive an NRCA action alert, please take two minutes to email your members of Congress. With this improved grassroots advocacy feature, NRCA provides a pre-populated, editable letter that only requires you to click on “send” to swiftly communicate with your members of Congress. As NRCA grows its team of roofing advocates, its voice on Capitol Hill will be amplified.
Share your story
This tool allows you to easily share anecdotal stories about how federal policies either help or hurt your company. Everyday stories are important to NRCA as we advocate for you on Capitol Hill—your personal stories help members of Congress understand how federal policies are affecting constituents. Your stories, whether positive or negative, can bring a policy issue to the forefront of a representative or senator. In addition to getting involved in advocacy from your office computer or on your mobile device, NRCA’s Washington, D.C., staff wants to work with you to build stronger relationships with your elected officials.

Face-to-face engagement
Not only is it important we make our collective voice heard through online advocacy, but it also is important you build individual relationships and communicate in person with your elected officials. Much like the business environment, relationships are important in politics. By attending townhall meetings or even inviting a member of Congress to a job site or your place of business, you can start to build a relationship with your member of Congress. Being able to talk to your elected officials, sharing your views and educating them about the ins and outs of your business can and will pay dividends.

Consider the following ways to engage your elected officials.

Congressional meetings
A great time to meet with your members of Congress is when they are in their home states or districts. Depending on whether you are meeting with your representative or one of your senators, meetings can be set up in their respective districts or state offices. NRCA will work with you to set up the meetings and provide you with talking points addressing priority issues important to your business.

NRCA’s site-visit program
Inviting a member of Congress to your job site or office can add extra context to your discussion of policy issues. Touring a facility or job site while learning about the federal policies that directly affect your business is extremely valuable to your elected officials.

NRCA staff have seen firsthand how the site-visit experience is enjoyable and educational for those running for office or already in office. Providing a valuable experience for a candidate allows you to talk to him or her about your business and how policies are affecting you. Elected officials always appreciate an opportunity to put on a hard hat, talk to constituents and learn about the ways everyday policies affect your business.

The future
Your participation in NRCA’s grassroots program and the political process is important to the future of the roofing industry. NRCA invites you to join its advocacy network, and staff look forward to working with you to build a more robust team of grassroots advocates. The roofing industry’s influence will exponentially grow as contractors, foremen, superintendents, roofing experts, distributors, manufacturers and their respective families choose to make their voices heard on Capitol Hill.

Whether you are interested in inviting your members of Congress to your business or would like to set up a meeting with them in state, or if you have any questions about the NRCA Grassroots Advocacy Network, please contact me at npick@nrca.net or (202) 400-2591.

Nathan Pick is NRCA’s director of advocacy and political affairs.