



The Importance of Personal Relationships **Pat DeLeon, PhD, MPH, JD, former President American Psychological Association**

Being appointed to a particular policy board or committee clearly requires relevant subject matter expertise. That is what the public expects. One's interest must be timely; appointments have their own life cycle. The key to success might well be having developed a meaningful relationship with those influential in the appointment process. Although the announcement of those selected may be made by an elected or high ranking appointed official, they often rely quite heavily upon their staff for recommendations which are expected to take into account a number of relevant factors that should be considered. For example, have any Veterans been appointed in the recent past? Over the years, staff often develop their own subject matter and personnel expertise. They are intimately aware of which appointments worked out well and which did not. One of their roles is to facilitate the elected official being able to focus upon the pressing issues of the day and the larger picture, without being distracted by relatively minor details.

One should appreciate that being considered for a board appointment is an honor. The selection process is surprisingly competitive, with numerous colleagues being under consideration for the same position. Regardless of the board involved, one can be confident that there is never a lack of attractive and highly interested parties. Most of the time, one learns who else was being considered when the formal announcement is made. And then, the public only learns those that were selected. Accordingly, to be successful it is important to appreciate that personal knowledge of an individual being considered makes it significantly easier to recommend their selection. We would further suggest that you will be more effective getting to know someone when you are not asking for anything specific at the time; or, in the alternative, when you possess a long range vision and therefore have made a point of interacting with those involved on several occasions. For example, when you have discussed possible appointments over the years. One must be one's own best advocate.

In many ways, the appointment process for Boards and Committees represents the best of the nation's policy/political process. Those involved almost always want what would be best for their constituents. All would agree that society is well served by having diverse perspectives address complex public policy issues. To make a difference one must be personally present, possess long term vision, and appreciate that different perspectives can respectfully disagree. Being engaged, and even passionate about what one truly cares about, is important. To become personally known by those who make or influence appointments one must interact with them throughout one's career.

We would suggest that it is never too late to begin. Nursing possesses many unique skills which could be strategically showcased. You can make a real difference in the lives of those whom politicians deeply care about – their constituents and perhaps their own family members. If one wants to be seriously considered for appointment to a policy board, one should begin by demonstrating you *can* make a difference in the lives of your neighbors and community. Aloha, Pat DeLeon, PhD, MPH, JD.

Resource

Hinshaw, A. S, & Grady, P. A. (2015). *Shaping health policy through nursing research*. New York: Springer.