

## THE ADVANTAGE OF HAVING YOUNG ADVOCATES AT CAPITOL

by Kasey C. Lewis



I am 27 years old, a professional lobbyist, and I'm proud of both.

Client advocates play a vital role in our democratic institutions that date to the reign of King Charles I, of England.

Everyone deserves to have an advocate before our elected officials. In the legislative process, it's been said if you are not at the table, engaged in the policy debates that affect your life, community, or businesses, then you'll be on the menu.

Flip through the latest issue of *Influence Magazine*, and you will discover Florida is home for many seasoned lobbyists with safe spots in an Advocacy Hall of Fame. With strategic vision, entrepreneurial skill, and a burning passion for fearlessly engaging in the competition of ideas, many of these leaders have earned the ability to demand higher fees as shareholders/partners at an exclusive-level law or lobbying firm.

### Coming of Age in Crisis

I have great admiration for the incredible accomplishments of these professionals who have set a high standard for success in this highly competitive field.

Not too long ago, many of these leaders bravely made the jump to advocacy ranks after serving as legislative committee staffers or aides to elected officials. Now, a new generation is stepping up and making a name among Florida's best government relations advocates. We are a generation shaped by an intense and steady avalanche of Earth-shaking events including:

- Controversial and consequential elections where Florida often played a decisive role;
- Three-rounds of Presidential impeachment politics;
- Terrorist attacks including Sept. 11, 2001, Anthrax Attacks, and the Boston Marathon Bombing;
- Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq; and
- Homegrown violence with mass shootings and gang-related violence.

When you consider this and add to the mix this generation's fluency in using advanced technology and electronic tools, you'll begin to understand why it's smart to consider hiring a younger advocate to advance the goals of your nonprofit, association, or business in Florida's Capitol.

Young client advocates come with a fresh perspective being at the beginning of our careers. We think creatively and bring a diverse set of skills that can help develop innovative solutions to achieving legislative goals/priorities.



Not far removed from frontline legislative work or from the hard-knock campaign trail, we're willing to do the grunt work like canvassing neighborhoods in the summer heat to help cultivate relationships with lawmakers and to support members who embrace our clients' issues.

We have also built strong personal and professional relationships with the corps of traditionally younger members of the legislative staff, who play an influential role serving the members of Florida's part-time, term-limited Legislature. This can provide younger advocates with a leg up in winning a coveted meeting slot on a lawmaker's calendar, additional opportunities to vet legislative concepts, and access to build a greater level of trust with both the member and their staff. That is a recipe for success in Florida's fast-paced lawmaking environment.

### **It's All About the Upside**

Age may be "just a number" as they say, but there is clearly a tremendous upside to hiring younger advocates. Long-time lobbyists and big names at various firms tend to have a larger portfolio of clients built over years of work. Choosing a younger lobbyist with a smaller portfolio of clients means we can dedicate more time, effort, and resources to advocate for the client's issues and it means you can better avoid any conflicts in representation.

It's clear, if you have a priority mission to accomplish at the Florida Capitol, including younger advocates as leaders on your government relations team is a cost-effective way to victory in the halls of power. While we don't demand the same fees that shareholders and partners require, we believe, there is an incredible value proposition by hiring us, because we still bring with us the infrastructure and relationships associated with our firms and those who blazed the trail before us.

*Kasey Lewis serves as the Government Relations Specialist at Lewis, Longman & Walker, P.A., where she assists the Legislative Team in representing clients before the Florida Legislature, as well as tracking and monitoring legislation, amendments, and appropriations relevant to client issues. She previously served as a Legislative Assistant to Florida State Senator Lori Berman and to Florida State Representative Matt Willhite. She also has extensive experience working on local, state and federal political campaigns. Kasey was named one of INFLUENCE Magazine's Rising Stars of Florida Politics in their Winter 2021 issue, previously known as "30 Under 30." She holds a Master's in Public Administration and Policy from the American University. For more information, [click here](#).*

