



Episode Title: Lessons in Effective Government Advocacy -- A Conversation with Mark Washko

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Lynn L. Bergeson (LLB): Hello and welcome to *All Things Chemical*, a podcast produced by Bergeson & Campbell, P.C. (B&C[®]), a Washington, D.C., law firm focusing on chemical law, litigation, and business matters. I'm Lynn Bergeson.

This week, I had the distinct pleasure of visiting with Mark Washko, Head of Federal Government Affairs at BASF Corporation. I've worked with Mark for a while now and admire so much his extraordinary communication skills, particularly his ability to advocate on complex science policy and chemical issues, clearly and in a way that is relatable. We in the chemical community are constantly challenged on so many levels in this regard: how to speak clearly and to speak in a way that wins friends and influences those who may not share our perspective and how to remain respectful when addressing issues we care deeply about. Mark is absolutely top-notch in these areas, and our conversation offers some lessons in effective government advocacy. We discuss Mark's winning style, his approach to members and staff on Capitol Hill, what prepared him best for his role, and his advice to those thinking about embarking on a career in government affairs. Now, here is my conversation with Mark Washko.

Mark, you are Head of Federal Government Affairs at BASF Corporation, one of the largest chemical manufacturers in the United States and an affiliate of BASF SE, *the* largest chemical manufacturer in the world. Or so sayeth -- this is the third consecutive year of *Chemical & Engineering News*. You're among the top 50 companies. I am just absolutely thrilled that you're here today. As I told you a couple of minutes ago, I am a huge fan. You are so good at your job, and you're one of the nicest people in Washington. Thank you for being here.

Mark Washko (MW): Thank you for the invitation. I'm glad to be here. Thank you, Lynn.

LLB: Given the diversity of BASF's portfolio, both in terms of products and markets, and BASF's well-recognized commitment to *sustainable* chemistry, I think our listeners would really appreciate hearing a little bit about you and your background. I know I'm very interested in what prepared you best for the job that you now occupy.

MW: What prepared me best for the job? For people of a certain age, I'll say my career path in Washington looks a little bit like an old *Family Circus* cartoon, when Billy runs through the neighborhood doing all kinds of different things. I wouldn't say it's linear, but I've touched about every part of the D.C. ecosystem, almost, having worked for a law firm right out of college. Then I went back to school, and I came to work for two different committees in Congress and two trade associations before finally getting a job in the private sector with BASF.

I've learned a little bit at every place I've been, a little bit about what motivates and what people are looking for. I think the successful advocate can understand what are the motivations and the interests of all the different sides. In the policymaking ecosystem -- I'll probably use that word a lot today -- you've got different actors. You've got the people with the voting cards. They're obviously important. You've got people in the agencies, you've got NGOs [non-governmental organization], you've got corporate interests, you've got trade associations. All come at it from slightly different points of view. But as long as people all are engaged and they're listened to, I think we end up with sound policy at the end of the day.

LLB: No truer words have ever been spoken, Mark. Speaking of products and markets, perhaps you can give our listeners a sense of the scope of your responsibilities. For example, do you cover all federal issues for BASF Corporation? -- because I would imagine a company of your size and diversity is focused on a whole bunch of different issues -- Or do you have a team of subject matter experts here in Washington, or elsewhere, that help you divvy up all of the issues that you monitor?

MW: No, we absolutely have a team, and my job is actually two parts. One, I'm Head of our Washington office for BASF, which is more than Government Affairs. We have a couple of attorneys in town. We have our agriculture business is present as well, as well as government affairs. We have seven government affairs professionals in town. And I've got just an amazing team. I say we have a world-class team of advocates, and as you say, subject matter experts.

We each have our separate portfolios. We are divided up by issues, not by whether we work House or Senate. But I'll explain it this way. I worked for someone once who explained Washington in terms of *whos* and *whats*. The *whos* were the door openers, and the *whats* were the knowledge people. I don't see the world that starkly. Quite frankly, we actually hire people for our team. We believe the most effective people are people who are both subject matter experts or can *become* them, because we've had people that have started off in one area and gone to another and become recognized experts, but also who can translate that into Advocacy World.

We all know there are some very smart people you wouldn't necessarily put into a Hill meeting, and there are other people who just don't have the curiosity to go very deep on issues. I am very blessed to have a team that does both amazingly well.

LLB: Under your tutelage, I'm sure they learn well and ably.

MW: Finding those people, finding those gems and bringing them as part of the team -- it just makes my job so much easier. It's great when members of your team are the first calls by people that have a question on a technical issue, or how is this going to be perceived? That just -- it makes my job so much easier, and I really, really enjoy it. Again, just working for a leading company with a great team is fantastic.

LLB: They're lucky to have you, too, Mark. We've been talking some about subject matter expertise and how did you come to the position that you're in, but what interests me is your ability to take very technical information and present it in a way that is understandable, relatable, and accessible to the other, the person with whom you are speaking. The skill sets that I think are essential for the job you do are hard to quantify. You have a law degree, which I am sure is pretty helpful here in Washington, but not necessarily. But perhaps you can disabuse me that it's essential. You have an undergraduate and master's degree in government and public policy, respectively. I suspect those, too, are very helpful in your job. But what would you have done differently in the education or experience department if you were to look back and know that you were going to ascend to the position that you now occupy? Would you have made any decisions differently?

MW: I look at this as the regret question, and I'll say that I wouldn't be where I am now had I made different decisions. There are so many different forks in the road. There was a point in my career where I could have ended up in Richmond. There was a point where I could have ended up in a different way. But no, everything I've done has gotten me to the point where I am now, so I wouldn't do anything differently in that regard. But in terms of the most important skills, I will say the longer I'm working, the older I get, the more I want to simplify. I think we make things more complicated. I think the skills that are most important are the ability to communicate and the ability -- not only the ability, but the willingness -- to be open to hearing different points of view and always willing to learn. We are in a city of extremely bright, talented, knowledgeable people, and I come to work every day. I've got three children, and I tell them that I go to work every day. I still go to school and I continue -- I learn every day.

LLB: You are an adult learner. Right.

MW: I have learned from you, from your colleagues during this process. The most important thing is to know that you don't know everything. I continue to learn from folks. Again, communication. It's one thing if you can absorb the knowledge, but if you can't translate that to somebody else. I think one of the important skills for people who do what I do in the advocacy world is take very complex things and make it relatable. I mentioned the different elements of the ecosystem before, whether it's the regulatory people at agencies or the Hill staffers or something. For me, as the Head of Government Affairs Federal for the world's largest chemical company, I took one chemistry class in college to satisfy my science requirement. So I figure if I can take chemistry issues and make it relatable to Hill staffers, then I'm doing my job. It helps me not to have to be so technical and make it translatable.

More importantly, unlike, say, a consumer products company where you go to a store and you see, "Oh, this is X brand, and I have this at home," our chemistry is in every part of the economy, from automobiles, to construction, to cleaning products, to agriculture, and so forth. How we work with our customers in the value chain and say it's our chemistry that makes their products work. Therefore, whether it's a regulatory issue, an approval thing, this is how things get to the economy. That's the important thing is to that Hill staffer, it's "We have employees in your district" or "People that you know use these products one way or another." And it's just -- it's bringing it home in that way to make them understand.

LLB: Sure, sure. No, I got it. I know one of the reasons you are as successful as you are, Mark, is because you *do* translate complex topics in a very easy to understand, relatable way, which I think is *so* essential for communicating with folks up on the Hill in particular.

You ascended to your role back in 2015, and as you already indicated, you worked previously on Capitol Hill, and you've worked through multiple sessions of Congress that have been under changing political parties. Real important question to me, because I really admire the work that you do, is how different, if at all, is your approach to advocacy given changed circumstances? Or do you modify your approach at all, depending upon who's in power and what the issues of the day are? Perhaps you've got a one size fits all. I don't know.

MW: The approach doesn't really change. I will say in my 30 -- coming up on 33 years -- in town, policies I worked on -- I started working on energy policy and environmental policy for that time. I will say there's been no significant environmental laws passed without bipartisan support. It's not bipartisan to be bipartisan; it's having both parties engage in the process.

I always liked energy policy in my early days, too, because that was never a partisan so much as regional issues. You have different parts of the country. I'm from Pennsylvania. My grandfather was a coal miner: different interests than people where maybe renewables are more prevalent, or maybe where oil or natural gas. It's all different, but the different -- it's where the different parts of the country come together, so whether it's one party in control or it's split, the most important thing is being able to relate the policy issues to people and have them understand and have them care.

It's not so much, this is the Republican playbook or the Democratic playbook. It's not that. The idea is to try and get all sides to the table. It's just been my experience that one-party policymaking doesn't tend to work, and it lends itself to being come after by the other side. I think when both parties have something they can point to in legislation, it stands the test of time. It took a lot of time and effort, but the Lautenberg Chemical Safety Act was a -- for me, a ten-year process, building lots of bipartisan support.

There was another issue that I worked on for many years that came off with -- it took many years to make it look easy with a near-unanimous vote, but it was on the Sunscreen Innovation Act. It took a lot of building awareness in Congress. It took a lot of coalition building and sponsors on both sides of the aisle in both houses of Congress. At the end, people said, "That wasn't hard." No, it took a lot of work to get there, but we had both parties in both houses of Congress weighing in. That's how you build good policy.

LLB: Speaking of change, given that Capitol Hill is always changing, the sense I have from the perch I occupy is that hyperpartisan times, like the ones in which we now live, probably make your job immeasurably more challenging. I'm just speculating. Maybe not. But in addition to the heightened partisanship, how does the fact that Congress is so closely divided affect your job, if at all? Maybe this is just more of the same, maybe a little tuned up right now. But again, I don't occupy the job you do, Mark. You're there every single day on Capitol Hill. What's it like?

MW: I'll put it this way. When working on the Lautenberg Chemical Safety Act, there were several party changes in the House of Representatives -- Republican, Democrat, Republican. In the Senate, we had strong bipartisan support to get it done from Senator Lautenberg and Senator Vitter, to get it done. I'm not sure that Congress is any more or less partisan than it was. I think changing parties make it even a little bit more challenging because when a new majority comes in, they bring in new committee staff and there's general turnover in the Members' offices.

One thing we're seeing now -- after several party changes -- is a lot of staff turnover in the past six or eight years. It's also been different since COVID, where Congress was closed for a couple of years. A lot of staffers that were around -- save some long-term committee staffers that we know -- a lot of people are new, so we have to get them up to speed on the new issues. To me, the bigger challenge is having people understand complicated issues, more so than whether they're for the red team or the blue team, and which side they're on.

Good policy doesn't matter if you get people to understand the importance of getting it done. I would say it hasn't made it more difficult. It's just, it's more -- the bigger challenge is the continual staff turnover. That's not a bad thing. Staff come to D.C.; they sometimes leave. They sometimes go to other positions. For our job, it's to make people understand what we do, and that's just part of the fun of meeting a lot of great people over the years in this town.

LLB: To your point, TSCA [Toxic Substances Control Act] reform was a ten-year labor of love. To some --

MW: -- Love is one word. I don't know.

LLB: -- Challenging. But by any independent standard, it was tough. Do you approach your job in presenting issues differently depending upon what the issue is? In other words, do you have a single approach, or an operating practice that varies according to the type of topic that you're dealing with? Is the approach the same when advocating on super high level, important, and complex issues, or --? It's a tough question because I'm just constantly amazed at how you can kind of calibrate your approach. I've seen you in action, Mark. I've seen you talk to people at the White House, on Capitol Hill, in senior executive positions, and you have this wonderful ability to kind of modulate your approach, depending upon the issue. Does that just come naturally, or how did you come to do that?

MW: I don't know. I can't say it was part of a plan. It's not like a class that I took or anything. It's just relating to people. You asked earlier about certain skills, and I think just the ability to be conversant with people and understand a little bit about where they're coming from just makes it easy to talk to them. I wouldn't say that I change how I approach people where they are so much as I'm just understanding with whom I'm speaking, and what they need to know, and how they can be helpful in the policy process.

There are different levels. I would say, at least from BASF's perspective, all the issues that we work on are important to us. They may have a different level of attention from Congress in a given session, and we do work on issues. Of course, one company is not going to push Congress to do something that it's not inclined to do or doesn't have the bandwidth to do. But everything we work on, we try and push to a good outcome for us. Sometimes everything aligns, and sometimes it doesn't.

Just an example. I did trade issues for a number of years, and Miscellaneous Tariff Bill was an important thing. We didn't think it was going to happen. And then all of a sudden, just like lightning, everything came together, and it got passed. It took many years of laying groundwork, and then boom --

LLB: -- Done, right.

MW: It just happened. Sometimes lightning -- you catch lightning in a bottle, but the important thing is, if you're always ready and you have that groundwork laid, like my team, we've got

over a dozen issues that we are working on. Will they all come to fruition this Congress? Probably not. A couple, I hope, a couple of expired programs get reauthorized. That'd be great. But when they do happen, it's because we put a lot of work into going up to it. You're just being prepared for when that magic happens.

LLB: It's great that you -- you already indicated that not only are you a subject matter expert in the areas that you and I work on, but you just mentioned energy. I didn't realize that you had an energy past, and trade. All of those issues are interrelated when it comes to problem solving on complex chemical issues, like those that we deal with.

MW: You also mentioned -- just if we can go back a little bit -- about skill sets. Another important thing for people in this town who desire to be here for a while is the ability to pick up and learn. Because I came to town as an energy and environment person. But again, I did trade. It may surprise you: I worked on property insurance issues for a while and the National Flood Insurance Program.

LLB: Really!

MW: Just part of my *Family Circus* career path. But if one is willing to learn new ideas, then the skill set about how to work with Congressional committees and staffers, that's translatable, depending on the issue.

LLB: No, absolutely. One of the issues that we work on a lot these days is just trying to address the many challenges that companies face when seeking to introduce what I regard as exciting, new, sustainable, circular kind of chemical technologies to market. Some of the EPA [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency] implementation challenges posed by the implementation of the 2016 amendments to TSCA. I have a couple of issues here that I think some of our listeners would be interested in.

I think we both appreciate that there's a role for Congress, but there are lots of opportunities to address these challenges in ways beyond seeking legislative opportunities. Is your approach different on these issues when you're advocating before the Hill versus senior executive or other federal agency leadership teams? These are technical issues. They're challenging issues, and they're super important issues for certainly many of our clients, and I know BASF, but this particular skill set of introducing new technologies and applying a brand new, relatively brand new federal law and evolving EPA policies to these technological innovations is tough. How do you make that relatable to folks on Capitol Hill who may not appreciate the nexus between this new chemical technology and a better, greener, more sustainable car part, for example?

MW: The first step of any advocacy effort is building awareness. For us, when we've got new chemistries we'd like to bring to market, if there's a problem, first we have the application process and we do all that. But if something is -- we want to make people aware of new things that we're trying to get done. So whether we're talking -- this happened on a recent call with senior Administration people. Highlight some issues where things may be getting stuck and make them aware of it. Also with members of Congress. And then how do we work together?

An example of -- it's not just government affairs, but it's with our internal experts. There was an issue on chemistry that EPA was looking at, like, "How do we assess this? How do we look at this new chemistry?" So our internal experts help work with others and EPA to say, "This is how you will want to evaluate these chemistries." And then we bring that and

say, “We’re working with an agency to try and help them help us, essentially help our customers in the economy, and eventually bring these new, exciting chemistries to market. So no one does it by themselves, but building awareness of what is out there and then how can we be helpful?”

I think what’s sometimes missed in this environment that we’re in is that everyone is adversarial when that’s really not the case. We want to work with the agencies, work with Congress to say, “We have some great things we’d like to bring to market,” and to the extent that we can make them, bring them, make them here, etc., that’s what we like to do. We want to make that happen. If there are frustrations sometimes, things take maybe longer than we would like, but we also want to understand and respect the process, and be as helpful as we can in making sure that everything gets a look and eventually gets into commerce.

Something else that -- part of our education process on TSCA, especially with Hill staff, is just explaining how a long, sometimes arcane, process -- not sometimes, but -- how a process they don’t understand actually works, and bringing them into it, but doing it in a short-form way that they leave the meeting understanding it. I mean, the experts really get it. But for -- you mentioned there’s a role of Congress in understanding whether -- and making sure that things are working. But the people, the staff who are advising the Members, their bosses, they need to understand and explain it to them, too. So that’s our job.

The biggest job of us in advocacy is really just helping people understand issues they may not be aware of or may need to learn a little bit about. That’s not a bad thing, as long as people want to keep learning, we’re good. I also should say, as a former Congressional staffer, I have tremendous respect for the staff, and people have no idea how many issues staffers are expected to deal with and advise their bosses on. That’s why I love bringing people to Washington and taking them to personal offices and saying, “This is what an office looks like.” If you think of every Member as a CEO for their district or their state -- although in the Senate, there’s two -- they have to know an awful lot and be able to advise their boss, who’s going to vote on a lot of complicated things. Just tremendous respect for staff. Then the subject matter experts that are the committee staff, they just do an amazing job. They’re there to advise everybody, all the Members on the committee, and bring a level of expertise there. It’s just fascinating.

LLB: Oh, and it’s part of the skill of calibrating, reading the room. If this is a young new staffer who may not be as familiar, probably approach it one way, versus the subject matter expert who’s been there. But curating those relationships, always being open, receptive, and respectful of the diversity of the issues *they* deal with and the pressures *they* are contending with is as important as ensuring that they understand *your* pressures, right?

MW: Right. Also, the relationships -- as you get to know people -- people I’ve observed who stayed in town and are successful over the long haul, realize that the person who is the junior staffer who was just hired to answer a phone someday may be the chief counsel on a particular issue. Never look at someone -- I used to lead a lot of Hill days for different associations, and sometimes people would be upset when they got to meet with, “Oh, we’re only meeting with staff,” it’s like -- no, the Member meeting is great, but the Member is going to turn to the staff to advise them, too. This is just a pitch for staff are really important in this entire process.

LLB: Absolutely. That really defines your very being, Mark. You are so respectful of everyone. We recognize that there’s a big cheese up there, right? The Member, and the senior subject

matter expert. But everyone on Capitol Hill has a role to play, and treating everyone with respect is a winning strategy.

MW: Absolutely.

LLB: Let me divert our discussion a little bit to talk on other matters in which you may be engaged, because in our complex world, which is shrinking, you've got very important state issues, particularly in the chemical area. You might have state initiatives that are to some extent every bit as important as a federal initiative. Of course, being an affiliate of BASF in Germany, we are very mindful of what's going on in the European Union, and elsewhere in the world. How do you leverage your understanding of those issues that might have a bearing on how issues here in the United States are framed and ultimately acted upon? Do you engage in those issues, or are those other people on your team?

MW: Okay, two parts of that. First, I heard a question about state advocacy. We have -- I've got a counterpart who's our head of state government affairs, and he's got a team, and they cover the 30-plus states in which we operate. They do an amazing job of following legislation, and engaging, and providing input. As Congress -- sometimes Congress is more active, sometimes it's less. When Congress is less active, we find the states become more active. Then, some policy battles are fought state by state, and the engagement of the state team is just a tremendous strength because I and my team work at the federal government. It's just here. The state team has to deal with state capitals all around the country. That's another challenge, because sometimes if you get enough states together, it essentially forms a national policy. That's the state side.

On global issues, for BASF, two parts: one, we have a one-voice policy. So whatever we're saying, if we're saying something in Europe, we're saying it in North America, we're saying it in Asia. We make sure we have alignment across the entire company on that. For example, we have a net zero by 2050 policy. We are pursuing that on a global basis. How do we do that? Then it comes down to the regions. What is each region doing? The European approach to climate is a little bit different than what North America is doing.

The [Inflation Reduction Act] (IRA) is a little over a year old, but we're engaged in seeing how can we reduce our emissions here, and doing things like that. But we also have global teams. Until recently, I was working on climate; now I've got a colleague who's doing that. But there's a global climate team; I serve on the global trade team. There's also a global advocacy team. We all work together and bring to the table what is happening in our respective regions so that there's an understanding and a coordination.

LLB: As we approach the -- what some here in my shop called the Silly Season -- the election cycle -- does your approach to advocacy shift at all, or do things change fundamentally, or is it just pretty much business as usual, but people are distracted?

MW: I'm not going to say anything about how your staff characterizes the season. I'm just going to say that there are cycles in policymaking. We know that once we get into next summer, the focus is going to be on the Presidential race. Absolutely. The window for more comprehensive policymaking will probably be closing sometime early next year. That really depends. But we just keep going. Like I said earlier, some policies take many years to develop before there's finally action taken on them, so *that* work never stops. Whatever is happening electorally doesn't affect our desire, willingness, and need to keep working with Members of Congress, the Administration, to highlight both positives and negatives as we continue to go forward.

LLB: What are some of the biggest surprises, if you can share any, with our listeners when you meet representatives or staff up on Capitol Hill, or Members for that matter? Have there been any consistent surprises, or are you *always* surprised with the newness of the people with whom you are dealing and the issues that you're asked to address?

MW: I don't know after 33 years, if I'm going to say I'm surprised by *anything* anymore, but I will say this: When people -- and I wish I could remember the exact Teddy Roosevelt quote at this point about the man in the arena -- the people who put themselves out there in elected politics, and they get elected to come here and represent their districts, their states, they're putting themselves on the line. They come from all walks of life, and they all bring their stories. When they bring staff, *they* bring their stories. I'm always amazed, and I love learning the new paths that the Members come from when they get here. I can't say that I'm surprised by people anymore, because there's so many people from so many different walks of life that come here, and it's great.

In my view, people all want to come here, and they get elected because they have a vision for making a difference, for their constituents and for the country. I respect that tremendously, because they put themselves out there. It's a lot easier sometimes to be the person behind the scenes giving advice than the person who's out there that has to put their name on the ballot every two, four, or six years, or put that voting card in and cast a particular vote one way. But I will tell you that when I do bring people to town and we do meet with Congressional staff and go into offices, people are surprised by how many staff there are, or aren't; how the offices are, which are sometimes crowded and very noisy, and they wonder how people can sometimes get work done. But after several years of being closed, I'm excited that Congress is open and we can walk door to door and see people in Congressional offices and have those personal relationships.

I like telling people that -- and I *believe* this -- that people who do what I do will not be replaced by AI because we have such a -- it's about relationships. It's not just about facts. It's about relating to people, and I don't think that can be done by robots.

LLB: No, I couldn't agree more. And that raises an interesting question. When COVID did hit, how did that change your ability to engage at a personal level?

MW: It made it difficult. I'll put it this way, because not only did we have COVID, but we also had a party change in Congress. With party change comes new staff; staff that you know leave, new staff come in. It was extremely difficult -- I'm not going to say impossible -- it was extremely difficult to build the relationships when you were trying to meet over -- pick a platform. I know half a dozen of them now, from Teams to Zoom to, etc. But whereas before you could walk by an office and say, "Hi, nice to meet you. I'm Mark. Can we grab coffee and get to know each other?" It's hard to cold-call on Zoom. It just was, because it's really -- because then you're setting time aside for some --

LLB: It's scheduled. Right.

MW: It's weird. It just felt weird. It doesn't feel natural, and that made it difficult. I would say during COVID, especially after the change, if you had relationships, it was great. If you didn't have the existing relationships with the new staff, it made it very, very, difficult.

LLB: Really hard. Yeah.

MW: But what also helped was some of the people who went into the new Administration were people that we knew from the Hill, and so those relationships were still there. Granted, there were others, too, but it was difficult. It was difficult.

LLB: I'm sure you -- like -- I much prefer in-person meetings.

MW: Absolutely.

LLB: I'm very appreciative of Teams, and Zoom, and all of the different electronic platforms because they do make life easier, but they are so artificial. As to your point, the spontaneity, the ability to kind of be there with the other, appreciate where they may be coming from, your ability to read the room is so much more attenuated. In your job, or in the job of any advocate, I think it's important to be able to be up close and in person with another person to appreciate where they might be coming from, read their body language, just pick up on the nuances of --

MW: -- Absolutely --

LLB: -- tone and inflection. It's hard.

MW: It's hard, but it's also -- since COVID, too, now where many of us use one or more different platforms, but to get four or five people to say, "We need to go meet with so-and-so in an office," we just need a five-minute meeting, a ten-minute meeting. You can get that together online really fast and do that without having to spend time to travel back and forth. So you can do in ten minutes what would take probably an hour, hour and a half, by the time you travel and walk and meet. There is a benefit to that, too. I think they can work -- and we're all figuring it out -- how to make both work together. I think there's no substitute for in-person, but sometimes when a quick meeting works and you can get everybody together --

LLB: -- so much the better.

MW: Absolutely.

LLB: Mark, I know at this stage of my career, I talk to an awful lot of younger people who are coming into the profession, thinking about career opportunities. I'm sure you probably share some of those responsibilities in working with the next generation of advocates, lawyers, and others. Do you have any words of advice that you want to offer anyone who's listening to this podcast and may be thinking about a career in government affairs? I think it's one of the world's toughest jobs, because you *have* to have those language skills. You *have* to have the personal skills, and also be willing and open to listen to the other.

MW: I've got a couple of things. One, for a lot of people, the path to government affairs is someone who comes out of a Congressional office, or a committee, or an executive agency. However, it's not the only way to do it. There are some people on my team that have not worked in Congress, but are extremely effective at what they do. But they've worked in associations or other things. So there isn't one way. But I would say for people in general -- more the rule than the exception -- if you're interested in government affairs, I think one of the best things you can do first, is work on a campaign. Go work on a campaign, whether you're in school or just out of school. There's nothing like it. I've worked on several, when I was in grad school, when I was out of school. It's a great experience to start building relationships under the fire of a campaign. The nice thing about working on a campaign, as opposed to legislative advocacy, is you have a date certain by which you have a determined

outcome. You know that you won or lost, and it's over. But there's a lot of work and not a lot of sleep at the very end. But no, that helps build the relationships.

Beyond that, government affairs, you can go a couple of different ways, and I'll just pass along something that I heard when I was spending a summer working in Richmond, Virginia, at the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). I had a conversation with the general counsel at DEQ, and I was in law school and trying to figure out what I wanted to do. What this person told me was, "Figure out whether you want to be an analyst or an advocate. And once you come to that decision, it'll make it much clearer where you want to go." I'm frankly a little bit of both, trying to split the difference.

LLB: You are the best of both, Mark.

MW: But again, continual learning. But it's advocating in a multidimensional chessboard that is Washington, because it's not as simple as saying this or that. It's an ever-changing environment, as you mentioned earlier, with party control switching in the House, or the Senate, or the Administration. It's -- what you did ten years ago -- like when I did energy policy, there was like a ten-year average for new energy bills. The party control may change, but the issues didn't change. So here, now we're having some new issues, what's happening in the world, as well as party changes. So it's an ever-evolving environment.

LLB: Appreciate that, especially the analyst versus advocacy. As a lawyer -- you're a lawyer; I'm a lawyer -- I think being an advocate for your client, for your cause, it's such an honor to do that. But there's plenty of room for folks that are not wanting to be as out there, but really want to analyze and do the tough analytical stuff that enables us to do our jobs successfully.

MW: Absolutely. And here's that word again -- in the ecosystem in which we operate, you've got corporate lobbyists, such as myself. You've got law firm, such as yourself. But we also have very bright and engaged people in think tanks. They're the analytical people that provide some of the research that policymakers rely on. So there's that avenue to pursue. People -- besides think tanks -- the NGOs are a robust part of our community.

LLB: An important part.

MW: -- In the world in which we operate. My company was part of a coalition for several years on climate, working closely with a handful of NGOs. And you know from working on the Lautenberg Chemical Safety Act, having NGO engagement really helped get this over the line.

LLB: Absolutely.

MW: And without that, again, to the point of having different perspectives all brought to the table and understanding the motivations that the different groups need to satisfy for their constituencies makes it a better process. So government affairs -- it's not just lobbying, it's policy development, it's research, it's putting new thoughts out there. Some of the things now that people are talking about, as they got into the discussion from years and years of research and work that people hadn't really thought about in those terms. So I would say, don't limit what you think about as government affairs.

LLB: Mark, thank you for being here. You have been an extraordinary guest. I've learned a lot. I mostly just wanted to compliment you on your skills, your ability to communicate, the ability to take *really* complex stuff and make it relatable to the other. I think it's an

important reason why you are as successful as you are. I agree with you totally that we are the sum of our parts, and the greater the diversity of the communities that we engage with, the more likely it is we're going to get to a common ground.

MW: Thank you for inviting me. I just wanted to say, as the Head of Federal Government Affairs for BASF, where we create chemistry for a sustainable future, I appreciate the opportunity to be with you today.

LLB: You've been a great guest. Mark. Thank you again for being here. Appreciate it so much.

MW: I appreciate the opportunity. Thank you very much.

LLB: Thanks again to Mark for speaking with me today about being an effective advocate in federal government affairs and communicating clearly and successfully on complex science policy issues.

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