

# LESSONS FROM LOBBYING

BY YOSSI KRAUSZ



"It never stops"—Ezra checks his email before entering the Capitol

# AS OUR REPORTER FOLLOWS A LOBBYIST THROUGH THE HALLS OF POWER, HE PICKS UP SOME IDEAS ABOUT WHAT IT TAKES TO GET THINGS DONE IN WASHINGTON.

I didn't know why they were called lobbyists.

Well, now I do.

On a drizzly Tuesday night recently, I got on a train in Union Station in Washington, D.C., heading back to New York. My feet were aching. I had been wandering around the lobbies (and hallways and underground passages and so forth) of the Capitol building and the surrounding office buildings that house the offices of senators and congressmen. I had been following a real, live lobbyist, Ezra Friedlander, CEO of The Friedlander Group, as he worked his powers of persuasion on lawmakers and members of their staff.

It's unclear where exactly the word lobbyist comes from, and whether it has an American origin or a British one, but according to all reports it refers to the actual "lobby" of a legislative house where individuals would carry out their attempts to sway the opinions of elected officials; hence the word "lobbyists." I can testify that it is tiring work and it's tough on the soles of your feet.

But it's fascinating.

## His mission

Raoul Wallenberg usually needs little description for most Jews. Among those who had an impact on the Nazi Holocaust, there are few individuals as well-known as the Swedish diplomat who risked his life and eventually lost it in Soviet captivity due to his efforts to save European Jews slated for destruction.

Ezra Friedlander has been campaigning, for over a year, to have Raoul Wallenberg honored by Congress with a Congressional Gold Medal on his 100th birthday, which is in 2012. The Gold Medal is the country's highest civilian award, along with the Presidential Medal of Freedom. In order for it to be awarded, two-thirds of both the Senate and the House of Representatives have to cosponsor the bill before the respective congressional committees will consider it.

A bill becomes law when a majority votes in favor of it, but the Wallenberg bill must gain co-sponsorship by at least two-thirds of the whole Congress before it can even be brought for a vote. That means a lobbyist has a lot of work to do.

The Friedlander Group, with headquarters in New York City and Washington, D.C., specializes in representing a range of cli-

ents, from corporate, to not-for-profit, to foreign entities in New York and Washington, D.C., but Ezra's interest in Raoul Wallenberg is personal. His grandfather, the Liska Rebbe, ז"ל, who eventually established his court in Boro Park, New York, was saved by Wallenberg, and for some time lived in houses that Wallenberg designated as Swedish diplomatic territory. That was why Ezra spearheaded the Raoul Wallenberg Centennial Celebration Commission, combining his professional career with a private interest.

That's why he was in Washington, and that's why I was able to tag along.

## Tight itinerary

The schedule was packed. An email from a Friedlander Group staffer slipped into my inbox a few days before the trip, with times of appointments, office numbers, and names of members of Congress and staffers laid out. I scrolled down the list, noting that we'd be on the run from 11:30 in the morning until 5:45 in the evening, with no more than an hour between times listed for one meeting and the next, with sometimes only half an hour.

There were 10 meetings in all, and the first one would be with the two members of Congress who had first introduced the legislation in the House of Representatives awarding the Congressional Gold Medal to Raoul Wallenberg, Democrat Gregory Meeks and Republican Nan Hayworth, both from New York districts. The rest of the meetings would be with members of senators' and representatives' staffs. Many were with a chief of staff or a legislative director, two positions particularly capable of influencing a vote on legislation.

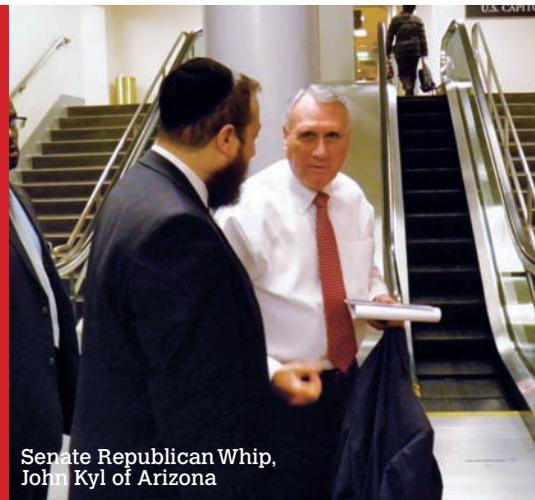
Smith, Durbin, Portman, Grassley, Coburn, Lautenberg, Nadler, Nelson. A list of names, some recognizably powerful and prominent. Some with notably large Jewish constituencies, too. Ezra's office staff has made notes about the constituency factor and other important factors.

Had I known the layout of the Capitol complex and the location of the offices named on the list, I would have started pre-training for the workout right then.

I made myself a reservation on an Amtrak train heading down at seven in the morning, aiming to get there at close to 11; one of Ezra's associates told me that Union Station in D.C. was a five-



Lesson 5: Embracing serendipity in the halls of power  
Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-New Jersey)



Senate Republican Whip, John Kyl of Arizona

minute walk to the Capitol, so a train ride seemed like the most relaxed way of arriving.

The day before the trip, I received an update from Ezra's office. They had squeezed in yet another appointment, with staff at Representative Kevin McCarthy's office, for 11:00 A.M. McCarthy, the Majority Whip, is the third-ranking Republican in the House of Representatives, an important addition to the itinerary. Ezra would grab me at Union Station and get me to the Capitol on time for that earlier meeting.

Indeed, the train trip down turned out to be relaxing. I sat next to a computer consultant who was heading home to Washington from a business meeting in New York. When I mentioned that I was going to be trailing a lobbyist around the Capitol, he asked the name of the lobbyist. He told me that most of the people who live in Washington and work in the Capitol, including the congressmen, their staff, and the lobbyists who spend time with them, all live in one area of Washington, along with other professionals, so he thought that he might know the lobbyist I'd be meeting.

(What he was intimating, and then made clear in further conversation, was that most of Washington, D.C., is an area that members of Congress and their staff wouldn't stray into and certainly wouldn't live in. Most of Washington's population is lower-income African-Americans, whose neighborhoods are physically separate from the "Beltway insider" part of the city. The racial divide that exists in the nation's capital is a phenomenon that requires an article of its own.)

He didn't know Ezra, who lives in Boro Park, but the picture that I got, of a small elite clique in which everybody knows everybody else, was a helpful preparation for my day on the run.

### Shoe leather and subways

Washington, D.C. slips up on you. We passed the stop for Baltimore, Maryland. Just a short time later, the train pulled into a station and stopped, and the passengers began getting off. I was taken aback; I had thought we'd see a sign of the city creeping up on us, since Union Station sits in the middle of town.

Ezra was waiting for me out in the disembarking area. He is a handsome and well-kempt man in his early forties, and he dresses in impeccably neat chassidic clothing. I was already a bit nervous about whether I was running late, but he looked relaxed, if business-like.

We walked through the expansive, hangar-like Union Terminal, and stood outside a few minutes under the overhang, watching the rain drizzling down. Neither of us had brought an

umbrella; the day before had been glorious and dry.

Eventually we headed out into the rain, aiming for the Capitol complex. As we walked, Ezra told me that he was disappointed.

"I usually love to walk here. It's beautiful," he said.

Which led to the first thing I learned on the trip.

## LESSON 1: WEAR COMFORTABLE SHOES...OR BE A MEMBER OF CONGRESS

A word on the layout of the Capitol complex is worthwhile.

A list of the most recognizable images in the world would certainly have the U.S. Capitol building somewhere toward the top. The big white building with the rotunda on top—that's the Capitol. As opposed to the big white one with a flat roof—that's the White House. (And the fellow with the round ears and round nose and white glove-like hands—that's Mickey Mouse. He's probably at the very top of any such list.)

The Capitol is where Congress meets to debate laws and vote on them. That goes on in the wings of the Capitol building, which sit to the north and south of the rotunda. The Senate has the north wing; the House of Representatives has the south one. The Capitol rotunda is only used for ceremonial purposes.

The Capitol building is large and impressive, but there is not nearly enough space for all of the House and Senate to have their offices in the building. Members of the leadership of both parties have offices there (which is where McCarthy's office is, and where we were heading first), but most members of Congress have offices in the Congressional office buildings that stand north and south of the Capitol building. The Senate Office Buildings sit in a row to the north, near the Senate wing of the Capitol; the House Office Buildings sit to the south.

The office buildings were added as space was needed. On the Senate side, the Russell Building was built in 1903, the Dirksen in 1954, and the Hart in 1975. On the House side, the Cannon Building was built in 1908, the Longworth in 1933, and the Rayburn in 1965. These are large buildings, with multiple floors, and I learned that wending your way through takes energy.

Union Station stands beyond the Senate buildings, far to the north of the Capitol, so we were facing quite a walk in the rain to reach Majority Whip McCarthy's office. But Ezra had a plan.

Being a member of Congress or of their staff has some perks. One of them, maybe the most fun one, is the Capitol subway.



Senator John Cornyn (R-Texas)



Senator John Barraso (R-Wyoming)



Rep. John Conyers (D-Michigan)

Three levels below street level, three different people-mover systems scoot from the House and Senate offices to the Capitol. The Russell Building is the closest part of the Capitol Hill complex to Union Station, and it is at the end of one of the lines. Ezra led me inside, where we slowly made our way through security and then headed for the basement.

In the post-9/11 world, security has been increased, so that the system is restricted to people with official business. Because we were heading for an appointment with a Member of the House leadership, who has offices in the Capitol building, we were able to get badges that would let us board.

Later in the day we took the modern-looking line that runs to some of the Senate buildings, but the line that runs from the House side is a pretty quaint system. The legislative leaders of the free world get to travel around in these little garishly-colored open-top cars that look like a kid's amusement park ride.

One of the side benefits of taking the subway was that we happened to meet Senator John Kyl of Arizona as we were boarding. More on that a little later. But the ride itself was very entertaining. I'm too big to go on these things on Chol Hamoed.

(I'm betting that if I were a U.S. congressman, there would eventually be newspaper headlines blaring scandal: CONGRESSMAN SPENDS ALL DAY ON SUBWAY, SOURCES SAY. Luckily, there doesn't seem to be much support for my campaign, so we won't be facing that anytime soon.)

The rest of the day was spent on our feet. The schedule had us at the Capitol first, then at the Rayburn Building on the House side for two meetings, then heading back to the Senate side and bouncing between buildings: Hart, Russell, Hart, Russell, Hart. Then we would head out to the House side for one stop, and then finally back to the Senate side for a last meeting.

I noticed that most people in D.C. are slim.

Because of rain, which fell on and off throughout the day, we stayed indoors as much as possible, so I got to see various tunnels that connect the complex (which also turned out to be a great place to run into members of Congress). There is a rabbit's warren of tunnels, from red-brick-lined ones to sleek techno-modern ones, that lie beneath. The new Capitol Visitor Center is also underground, and we used that as a dry shortcut.

(One tunnel that runs beneath the Capitol itself has a higher level of security; they confiscated a packet of licorice that I had in my bag. Ezra later kindly gorged me on bananas and Coca-Cola, the only sort of kosher food we were able to find in the cafeteria.)

The pictures of the Capitol, I found out, are deceptive; a large percentage of what is going on is hidden deep below.

## LESSON 2:

## THERE'S A SMALL PIECE OF LOBBYIST IN EVERYONE'S HEART

Lobbyists have a nasty reputation. They tend to be thought of in connection with corruption and favoritism towards special interests. And there are reasons for that.

Of course, one reason is the kind of bribery and corruption that Jack Abramoff is associated with. (He is now on the media circuit, claiming that he did little that was wrong.) But even legal methods of lobbying sometimes seem dodgy.

My time with Ezra didn't entirely reduce those concerns in my eyes. But I saw that part of lobbying is really just old-fashioned educating and convincing. We would walk into an office, meet a staff member, and Ezra would talk about Wallenberg, about Wallenberg's connection to the United States, and about the members of Congress who had already joined the effort.

He had several selling points. Obviously, the simple humanitarian story of Wallenberg is one that everyone can appreciate. But he also pointed out that Wallenberg's mission had been arranged by the U.S. War Refugee Board, so that although he was a Swedish representative, he was also an American representative.

He pointed out that the War Refugee Board had been put in place only toward the very end of the war, and therefore, honoring Wallenberg would emphasize not only the good that the United States can do in humanitarian crises around the world, but also the necessity of taking action early. "Imagine how many more we could have saved had we acted earlier," he said.

At one point we visited Senator Dick Durbin's office. Senator Durbin is the Assistant Majority Leader, the second highest ranking position in the Senate, also known as the Majority Whip; he would be a great person to get onboard—not only for his own vote, but more importantly because of his ability to sway others. Our appointment was with a staff member whose family originally came from Pakistan, and Ezra emphasized the human rights aspect of Wallenberg's story.

"I'm sure you understand the importance of human rights," he said. I would never have tried such a method; I would feel uncomfortable. But Ezra seems very comfortable in his skin, and the staffer seemed to be willing to help.

That ease with other people and with himself seemed to work, as far as I could tell. One thing that caught me off guard was when Ezra blew a kiss (along with a joke) toward some



Rep. Gregory Meeks (D-New York)



Rep. Chris Smith (R-New Jersey)

of the congressional staff, who were helpful in directing us to an office. It seemed like a European thing to do, perhaps, but rather different than the average American might expect. But people reacted with genuine warmth toward him.

I asked him about his view on the bad reputation of lobbying.

“Special interests sometimes are good interests,” he said.

“I believe that lobbying is beneficial, especially to communities that don’t enjoy big numbers, and everything in life can be used positively or negatively.

“Part of the legislative process is the ability of groups, individuals, corporations, and, yes, special interests, to advocate for their cause. If someone is taking advantage, others have to be vigilant to counter that. The process isn’t perfect on its own.

“There is no better form of government, warts and all, than ours. We’re able to sit here in the capital and walk into the offices of members, and ask Congress to pass legislation to give Wallenberg a Congressional Gold Medal. If you couldn’t lobby, that would mean you’d be cut out of the system.

“If we had Shlomo Hamelech as the government, we wouldn’t need lobbyists. But we don’t have him.”

I asked him whether the elected officials are able to hear the regular citizen through the noise of lobbying.

“They’re extremely concerned about their constituents. They track what people are talking about. If you ask a congressman what people are talking about, most will be able to tell you, ‘I got x number of calls on this, y numbers of calls on that.’”

He pointed out that the average citizen actually has a great deal of access to their elected officials.

“If you walk in through the front door, they’re not going to ask you who you are. You can walk in here and ask to speak to someone. They might ask you to write it down if no one is available, but they will speak to you if they can.

“You can’t do that in the Knesset. I’ve been in the Knesset many times. You have to have an invite by a member of Knesset to come in. If you don’t have an invite, you can’t get into the building. But here, you can walk the halls all day if you want.”

As we walked around, we saw groups associated with Occupy Wall Street wandering the halls or taking over the waiting rooms of some congressional offices. We spoke to a few; many of the people were actually from the home state of the congressperson whose office they were in, and they had come for an Occupy the Capitol event. But their presence was a bit paradoxical, the way Ezra was painting the picture. There wasn’t much special about occupying the Capitol; any citizen could do and ought to do the same, and no one would stop him or her.

Fascination with the process of decision-making in Washing-

ton, and with convincing the decision-makers, is what got Ezra started in the business to begin with.

“I used to come to Washington when I was a young *bochur*. I remember when Al Gore was still a senator. I remember going up to the galleries observing debates on the Senate floor. Then I introduced myself to senators and staff and learned about how the legislative process works.

“What really motivated me [to become a lobbyist] was the Holocaust. We all know about that famous march on Washington, where 400 *rabbanim* tried to meet Roosevelt to plead on behalf of European Jewry. However, certain ‘advisors’ told Roosevelt that those rabbis didn’t represent the Jews. For me, learning about this episode was a defining moment to develop an expertise in governmental relations.

“Also, the influence of Eddie Jacobson, a personal friend to Harry Truman, having owned a haberdashery together with him, underscored to me the importance of connecting on a personal level with a decision maker. Jacobson was very helpful in scheduling a meeting between Chaim Weizmann—then head of the World Zionist Organization—and Truman. Weizmann had been lobbying Truman to recognize the State of Israel. Weizmann later became President of Israel.

“So I realized that it was the personal connection that matters. I really don’t like the word connection, because it sounds like you came down from Har Sinai with a ‘connection,’ like I was given a ‘connection’ as a birthright. Yes, connections are important, but you develop it, and identify who is a potential connection, and remain engaged. Just meeting someone is not enough, if you don’t stay engaged and follow up.

“I always had a very strong interest in how public policy gets shaped, how the legislation gets crafted, who’s behind it, and how to get support. I used to come here when there was a \$49 one-way plane ticket. I used to come before I was 24, when I could still get a youth fare from the airlines. I would come down here and walk the halls and get to know people. You build up knowledge; nothing is given to you. And eventually, I developed a firm.”

How do you convince a member of Congress, anyhow? Does it involve slipping unmarked bills under a table?

Ezra, as you can imagine, denied slipping bills under any tables.

“No, that would be illegal.”

He also emphasized that he almost never personally contributes or organizes fundraisers for members.

“Contrary to popular belief, it’s not always about money.

“You need to be able to identify an issue that people can rally around. There is no replacement for what we are doing right now. We’re pounding the pavement. It isn’t one-stop, one-



Michael Schwartz, Chief of Staff of Senator Tom Coburn (R-Oklahoma)



Sharing a laugh with House Majority Whip Kevin McCarthy (R-California)

size-fits-all, you press a button and get what you want. We're living in an automated age—boom—send out 3,000 emails. It doesn't work that way when lobbying members of Congress.

"With controversial topics, especially ones that require an appropriation of funds, it's going to be difficult, especially in this climate. But any bill is going to require that you reach out to as many members as possible.

"The way the system is, everyone can lobby. Every organization, every special interest, every individual can lobby. What people need to understand is that, concerning a bill, we need to get it in front of as many people as possible, and we need to get them to focus on it. That is what we are doing.

"It's appealing to coalitions. Some are sitting on the Foreign Relations Committee, and they realize that the Russians have to come clean about what happened to Raoul Wallenberg, so you're appealing to them. There are some who have large Jewish constituencies, Holocaust survivor communities, Hungarian communities—everyone can identify with it on a different level. The unifying level is that you have a person who is an honorary citizen of the United States, who saved 100,000 lives, conservatively. How many people have saved so many lives?

"You definitely want to connect with them on a personal level. You definitely want to create an atmosphere where they have an empathy with you. That's by being friendly, being personable, and just being a *mensch*. It's also about being efficient, following up, and just being very professional."

The difference about a lobbyist, of course, is their knowledge of the workings of Congress, and their ability to take the time to visit over and over to push their case and get to know the people in the halls of power. But I did feel a bit better about the ability of the regular person to influence the political process. Just pick up the phone.

## LESSON 3: CONGRESS IS MORE EARNEST THAN WE THINK

The men and women of Congress aren't the most popular people in government. They are, in fact, the least popular. (A recent opinion poll put Congress's approval rating at 9 percent, prompting one writer on the *Atlantic Magazine's* website to ask who the nine percent are that actually approve.)

So I was surprised to find the amount of earnestness that actually exists in Washington.

When we met members of Congress or their staff, they were invariably friendly and interested, and often they agreed to reach out to their colleagues when Ezra asked—and in a few cases, even before Ezra had asked.

Some were enthusiastic. When we met Representative Meeks and Representative Hayworth, who had introduced the legislation in the House, they discussed the work that they would need to do to get other members onboard with the legislation.

Representative Meeks said that the legislation needed to reach a critical mass of congressional cosponsors, and to appeal to caucuses.

"Whether it's the Blue Dogs, the Progressives, the Women's Caucus.... Our goal is to get the legislation voted on before September."

"I've seen zero resistance on the measure," he said.

Representative Hayworth said that she had met only a minimal amount of resistance—only from those opposed to any medal-awarding at all. (One aide said that Representative Ron Paul had refused to approve a medal.) But she said that any resistance would only be a tiny minority.

She pointed out that the bill was an opportunity for some unity in a time of severe partisanship in Congress.

**"It's an opportunity for us to come together to recognize a hero for all humanity."**

"This is not a partisan issue, as you see from the sponsorship."

Leading the project in the Senate are Senators Kirsten Gillibrand (D-New York) and Senator Mark Kirk (R-Illinois). Their offices and staff are spearheading the Senate effort.

The two members of the House had good reason to sponsor this bill. Representative Meeks's district includes Jewish neighborhoods in Queens, including Far Rockaway, and Representative Hayworth's district includes Monroe and Peekskill. But their sincerity was evident from the way they spoke about the bill and Wallenberg, as well as from the enthusiasm shown by their staff.

Another person who was interested immediately was Representative Chris Smith. (Lakewooders may recognize his name; he is their representative.) He had joined the bill back in 1981 to make Wallenberg an honorary citizen, and was well acquainted with the idea. Representative Smith has been at the forefront of the fight against global anti-Semitism and wrote the legislation creating the Office to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism, a section of the State Department, and he spoke with us for 15 minutes about his efforts.

There was something very impressive about this non-Jewish congressman speaking plainly and emotionally about anti-Semi-

tism. (See the Q & A this week for more on Congressman Smith.)

But there were surprises even from those we met who were less knowledgeable about Wallenberg. I was slightly taken aback by the number of staff members that we met who had never heard of him (and I noted with some interest that the young Pakistani-American woman in Rep. Dick Durbin's office immediately knew his significance).

The legislative assistant to one of the senators confessed that he didn't really know anything about Wallenberg. But after Ezra spoke with him for a few minutes, he began making insightful suggestions about how to advance the legislation. For instance, he suggested finding out if there was a Swedish Caucus and which members were part of that. And, as we left, he agreed to try to do some legwork to not only bring the bill to the attention of the senator that he worked for, but also to find other senators who might be willing to sign up.

One of the most moving meetings that we had was with Michael Schwartz, the chief of staff of Senator Tom Coburn of Oklahoma. Michael and Ezra have been good friends for many years, and Ezra's voice had an edge in it as we came to see Michael, who was recently diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's disease. It was touching to see that the relationships involved in lobbying can go beyond simple business.

Michael reciprocated emotion. Though his last name is Schwartz, he's not Jewish; he was adopted by a Jewish family. But he had a surprisingly vigorous (and religious) idea to tell us.

"Let me tell you something. This is the kind of thing that no Jew could say. The history of Jews has been persecution. Why is that? Because Satan hates Jews. And why is that? Because the Jews are a sign of G-d's presence in the world. That's not something a Jew could say, because it sounds arrogant."

I was taken aback, but Ezra just told him, "Michael, every Jew needs a gentile."



Those emails never let up.

## I CAN TESTIFY THAT IT IS TIRING WORK AND IT'S TOUGH ON THE SOLES OF YOUR FEET.

get the debt limit raised but the Democrats will get blamed for it. What kind of person would do something bad for the country just to score points against his political opponents? That is wrong!

"[Senate Majority leader Harry] Reid endorsed [Senate Minority Leader Mitch] McConnell's plan—the first time he's agreed with McConnell about anything. Then he came up with the idea of this 12-member supercommittee, so that nothing would happen, because every time that you brought up anything, people would say that you had to wait for the supercommittee."

We also had an interesting discussion about the anti-tax advocate Grover Norquist. He not only admitted that Norquist has the Republicans over a barrel because of his demands about taxes, but also suggested that Norquist is a closet Muslim. Some of the things he said were a bit bizarre (Is Norquist really a Muslim?), but the level of sincerity was something I hadn't been expecting in a town supposedly full of wheeler-dealers.

We all laughed.

In the office of one chief of staff of a Republican senator, we had a very interesting (and off-the-record) conversation. He attacked both sides of the aisle for their lack of earnestness in the debt reduction talks that had just been going on.

"You had 12 Members of Congress, three of each party, appointed by the leadership of the House and Senate. To get anything done, you had to have seven votes. That means that one person had to cross party lines. Now, if you were appointed by party leadership, who is going to cross party lines?"

"If they would have picked three random members, things might have happened. They wanted nothing to happen for months, so they wouldn't have to make hard decisions."

"The first thing [Senate Minority Leader Mitch] McConnell did was come up with this bozo idea of giving the President unilateral authority to raise the debt limit and giving Congress the authority to veto that. In that way, he said, we'll

## LESSON 4: STAFF IS EVERYTHING

One entertaining part of meeting staff members of the various senators and representatives was the wide variety of accents that we encountered. Members of Congress generally have staff members who come from the members' home districts, so Southern members have staff with drawls and the Midwesterners sound midwestern.

But staff plays an important role in lobbying.

"Staff is what drives legislation. If they want to make something happen, it will happen.

"If the staff is not motivated, it's not going to happen. If I had to choose between the senator being motivated and the staff being motivated, I would choose the staff. People underestimate the staff, thinking that it is all the senator."

I asked Ezra about the quality of staff that he meets at the local level and state level, in relation to those in Washington.

He told me that you meet elite staff at all levels.

"You do have a wider pool to select from, as a member of Congress."

## LESSON 5: EMBRACE SERENDIPITY FOR SUCCESS

Some of the most fun parts of going along with Ezra were the times we ran into members of Congress in the halls. Although we were scheduled to meet representatives of about a dozen members of Congress, including some members themselves, the chance meetings gave Ezra an extra chance to introduce the legislation. (His memory for faces is obviously good; he would spot members of Congress out of the corner of his eye.)

"That was how I got Senator [Robert] Menendez [of New Jersey] on board," he told me.

We didn't have a photographer with us; Ezra's staff had thought that a professional photographer might make some of the people we were meeting nervous. I brought a camera along, and the times that we met members of Congress in the hall gave me the opportunity to find out what being a *paparazzo* must be like. As Ezra spoke to the member, I shot photos. One scowled a bit, and Senator Lautenberg said something in Yiddish that I didn't quite catch; maybe he was asking me to get his best side in the shots. But most, inured to photography by virtue of being famous people, were not fazed.

After we caught Senator Kyl nearing the escalator just off the Capitol subway, Ezra told me that his first handshake with Barack Obama, who was at the time merely a dynamic senator from Illinois, happened in a similar way.

Another accidental meeting came as we were walking in the

tunnel between Senate office buildings. A Jewish man stopped us and mentioned that he had worked on issues involving the Chabad library in Russia. After a little talk about that, Ezra was able to ask him about possible networking on the Wallenberg bill.

At the end of the day, we were rather worn out from running back and forth. The schedule said that we had to leave the Senate side, travel to one meeting at Representative Nadler of New York's office, and then get back to the Senate side to meet Florida Senator Bill Nelson's staff. Ezra decided to visit Bill Nelson's office first, to see if we could push the appointment earlier and avoid having to run back and forth.

We met with a young Jewish member of Senator Nelson's staff, who allowed us to make the appointment early and was eager to help on Wallenberg. Then we headed to the Rayburn Building on the House side and met with Rep. Nadler's staff.

On the way out of the building, we saw a party taking place in one of the meeting rooms near the entrance. Ezra decided to take a look inside, to see if anyone interesting was there.

By the door, a woman wearing a Magen David around her neck asked what we were looking for. Ezra explained that he was lobbying on a Congressional Gold Medal for Raoul Wallenberg, and he asked her what the event was.

She replied that the University of Michigan was holding a holiday party. She added that the university cherishes a very famous alumnus, none other than Raoul Wallenberg.

Wallenberg had been in the United States for college as a young man. He got a degree in architecture at the University of Michigan. It was quite a coincidence that our chance encounter became an opportunity to galvanize support for the bill!

As it turned out, the woman who we were speaking with had been involved in earlier efforts to commemorate Wallenberg's heroism; she and Ezra exchanged business cards and she offered to contact the Michigan congressional delegation.

In the corner of the room, we found a powerful member of the House of Representatives, John Conyers, Jr., enjoying the party. Conyers was the former chair of the Judiciary Committee and its current ranking member. Ezra began schmoozing with him and he found an easy sale; Conyers said that his support for the Wallenberg bill was an obvious and easy choice.

We walked back toward Union Station in the dark, a light rain drizzling down. The U.S. Capitol is beautiful at night, lit up from below. Ezra was staying on in Washington for the rest of the week, meeting clients and attending the White House Chanukah party. I said a few goodbyes as he checked some emails. (He told me earlier that emergencies crop up with clients back home every time he comes to Washington, and that day was no exception.)

I walked back to Union Station, and climbed onboard the train. I'm sure lobbying isn't always enjoyable, like any job, but the day had been a load of fun for me. (That subway was just great.)

But next time, I bring insoles. ●