

Wendy Riemann column: Advantageous Advocacy: New year, new offices, new beginnings

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Happy New Year! Tomorrow, January 20th, begins a new presidential administration and with it will come many new beginnings. We cannot plan for or expect government to be “business as usual” because in a strange irony, America elected a businessman, not a politician, to be the leader of the free world. Like any transition, there will be growing pains. There will be changes – some more noticeable than others. And this inauguration, there will be a larger shake-up of the status quo, per the electorate.

Additionally, earlier this month, Senators and Representatives were sworn into office for the start of a new Congress. Each comes to D.C. with a sense of purpose and hopes to make a difference.

As voters and advocates, we do not need to agree with any or all the positions these officials take, however we should always respect the office they hold in representing our one nation under God.

If an advocate has not already, now is the time to get organized for the year, including updating contact information. For example, many Wisconsin officials in Washington, D.C., have new office addresses, including: Representatives Duffy (2330 Rayburn), Gallagher (1007 Longworth), Grothman (1217 Longworth), and Pocan (1421 Longworth). Telephone numbers and email addresses remain the same.

Furthermore, it is important to remember that as a new Congress begins, the scoreboard returns to zero as the restart button is pushed. Legislation that was introduced or was moving last year is back to square one. Now is the time for making known any needed edits to legislation that will be reintroduced, updating materials, reconnecting with allies, or beginning the advocacy push again.

Now is also a good time to think about specifics. Saying “We need healthcare

prices to decrease” is not as helpful as providing good examples of ways to potentially achieve this. As new staff members join offices, it is also a great time for a group or business to make an introduction, explain its presence in the district, and how it can help the office – without making a formal ask.

A new session offers a fresh start. If a group has not reached across the aisle before, or needs to make amends, there is no time like the present to extend the olive branch.

Finally, let us not forget patience and understanding as new officials and new staff are finding their way – we were all new at our jobs once and mistakes are not only bound to happen, but to error is human. The important thing is forgiving and working to move forward, because we all sink or swim together.

— *Riemann is president of 1492 Communications, a consulting firm. Like [1492 Communications](#) on Facebook to learn more.*