



Our Industry's Steadfast Ally

By Liz Hunter

Unlike other industries that are also made up of mostly small businesses, the limousine industry has someone who is constantly watching its back. This person is always ready to step up to the plate and take on any challenge that operators face, whether it is locally, regionally, or nationally. That person is Barry Lefkowitz.

If you don't recognize the name, then you might want to familiarize yourself. Lefkowitz has been involved in the limousine industry for 10 years. His many roles stem from his career as a lobbyist that began 37 years ago, including former director of government affairs for National Limousine Association (NLA) and his current position as executive director of Limousine Associations of New Jersey (LANJ).

Originally a social studies teacher at Burlington City High School in Burlington City, N.J., Lefkowitz has had a passion for education and politics since the 60s. Spurred by the political movements during that era, Lefkowitz created a model for students that taught them lobbying techniques. This model snowballed into a federal program, prompting him to leave his position as a teacher and work on the program full time. As requests for his lobbying expertise came flooding in, Lefkowitz was encouraged to branch out on his own; so he founded Management and Government Resources (MGR) Inc. in 1977.

Over the years, Lefkowitz has made countless connections with government officials—state legislators, senators, congressmen—you name it, and he has probably been involved with them one way or another. His connection with Congressman Rob Andrews (D-N.J.) was what in fact led him to become involved with our industry a decade ago.

"We have always been close to Rob Andrews both professionally and personally for nearly two decades," says Lefkowitz. "He called to thank us for assisting in his campaign for governor in 1997 and asked if there was anything he could do for us. I told him to keep his eyes open for client work in D.C. The following week James Moseley and Don Kensey went to visit

Andrews." Both Moseley and Kensey are operators in the South Jersey area, and

they had gone to see Andrews for help with an issue—New York City was seizing New Jersey limousines for improper permitting. Andrews told them two things: one, that he would put in legislation on their behalf, and two, that they should call Lefkowitz.

The rest is pretty much history. Lefkowitz went on to work with the former South Jersey Limousine Association and motivated that entity to join with the association in North Jersey, ultimately creating one of the most active associations in the country: LANJ. Once involved with LANJ, Lefkowitz learned that operators were facing interstate seizure issues across the country, which fueled the origins of the Real Interstate Drivers Equity (RIDE) Act, signed into law by President Bush in November 2002. It was the first legislation ever introduced that was strictly for the limousine industry.

Lefkowitz saw the importance of addressing issues nationwide and knew he could play an integral role. After joining NLA, his first priority was to create a presence for the industry in Washington. He established the annual Day on the Hill to further the industry's efforts for federal legislation.

After 9/11, Lefkowitz and members of the limousine industry were able to testify before Congress and detail the devastation they faced afterward. "Our testimony proved how closely linked we were to the airline industry," says Lefkowitz. "It ultimately led to Congress changing the criteria for eligibility for Small Business Administration (SBA) loans, allowing many limousine companies to get assistance and really be saved from bankruptcy."

Overall, Lefkowitz has helped facilitate the signing into law of over 400 bills during his 37 years as a lobbyist. "I have remained within this industry because there are so many people who I have a tremendous amount of respect for and I see how hard they work for





Lefkowitz and Fran Shane (R) at MGR's offices



Lefkowitz (center) with members of Arizona Limousine Association

standards." Rose adds that creating legislation is not something every association wants to deal with because of the long and difficult process, and Lefkowitz has been integral in that goal. "He is a good intermediary and has the ability to get us meetings with key people to talk about issues so we can settle without legislation."

Mike Ballard, chairman and past president of

their business," he says. Whether it's working with Tim Rose, president of LANJ; Jim Sallinger, president of Pennsylvania Limousine Association; Jim Miller from Illinois Limousine Association; Gene Cockenboo, former president of Colorado Limousine Association; or helping build new associations like North Carolina Limousine Association or Kentucky Limousine Association, Lefkowitz has helped someone in every part of the country in one way or another. "Since LANJ's relationship with Barry began, he has been a tireless advocate for our industry," says Rose. "It's important to be proactive instead of reactive, and he was instrumental in helping us set up the New Jersey Limo Law, which increased insurance



Lefkowitz, Congressman Bill Pascrell, and NLA President Richard Kane at the Day on the Hill



MGR staff (L to R): Fran Shane, Fran and Barry Lefkowitz, Ginny Manocchio, and Dick Circus (not pictured Paula Fett)

Maryland Limousine Association (MLA), has turned to Lefkowitz often for help with MLA's grassroots lobbying efforts. "Barry has always been wonderful," says Ballard. "He never said he didn't have time for any of us, and he is

always ready to help out and give information wherever he can."

Throughout the years, Lefkowitz says countless people have come up to him at industry shows to thank him for his support, even though he had never even met them personally.

His experience and success are hard to come by, and Lefkowitz doesn't plan on slowing down. "Few people have the broad working knowledge of the industry and how the government and all of the issues relate to each other. We have worked with attorneys,

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accountants, and legislators and we have done the homework on things like overtime wages and Avis," Lefkowitz says.

Before strong federal legislation can be created to fight any of these issues or others that will inevitably arise, solid state legislation must first be established, according to Lefkowitz. "We [MGR] can help associations or individual operators develop and strengthen their legislative programs," he says. "We can give training workshops to associations so they may become more effective advocates to control their own destiny at the state level.

"The limousine industry lags behind in terms of political muscle. It's time for everyone to realize how important it is to be politically active," he says. "That's one reason New Jersey has been so successful because of the cocktail fundraisers, various activities with state legislators, and developing relationships with various regulating bodies like the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. This model can easily be transported to other associations and used to their benefit."

Fran Shane, former NLA executive director, is currently working with MGR and its government affairs division. "One of the real values Barry brings to the table is not only his relationship with local associations but the expertise he brought to state legislation," Shane says. "If he were to take legislation that had been passed in Pennsylvania, for example, to another state, that state's legislators might be more inclined to introduce it knowing that it had been successful elsewhere.

Making state legislature feel comfortable is something you can't put a price tag on."

Becoming more politically active is a surefire way to increase membership in an association. As operators see the value of being in an association, they are more likely to join to become a part of the industry movement. MGR's team includes Shane, who Lefkowitz says "brings tremendous experience with associations, not only in ones he has run, but also his time as a capable and well-respected executive director for the NLA." Also affiliated with MGR is Paula Felt, who brings 20 years of state and federal lobbying experience to the firm. "She is a sharp individual with a background centered on small businesses," says Lefkowitz.

All of these elements—connections, compassion, and industry know-how—combine to make Lefkowitz a valuable asset for any

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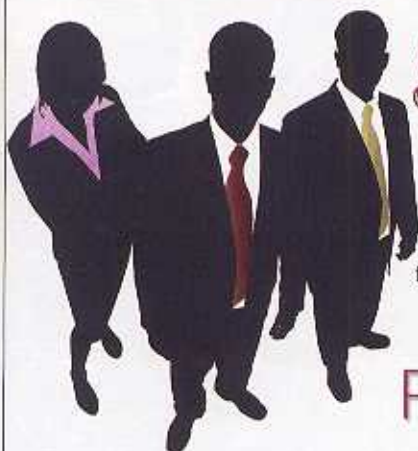
— Barry Lefkowitz

challenge that an association or operator might face. "I really feel like I am a part of this industry—'our' industry is how I always refer to it," he says. "I have been welcomed with open arms by most people and that's why we continue to work with the industry."

Lefkowitz is ready to help associations or individuals who need legislative assistance. Reach him at (609) 267-2855 or via e-mail at barry.lefkowitz@mgr-lobbyist.com. **LD**

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