

DARDEN POSITION: Manager, Government Relations (State & Local - East)

For more information / to apply please visit www.darden.com.

JOB OVERVIEW: This position is responsible for managing Darden's government relations efforts on the state and local level, with a primary focus in the eastern United States. In this role, the Manager will provide strategic government relations support for Darden and each of the Darden Restaurant brands. The core functions of the roles will include development and execution of the following strategies: overall government relations, direct and indirect lobbying, political, reputation management and relationship building all with the goal of strengthening Darden reputation and influence with policy-makers and to impact public-policy outcomes that enable the company's growth and profitability. The Manager will support the business by providing subject matter and regional expertise to internal stakeholders. They will provide guidance and communicate frequently with internal and external audiences about relevant policy and political topics.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Manage a large portfolio of government relations issues and strategies in multiple jurisdictions on the local and state levels across the U.S. (primarily East Coast)
- Support and advance Darden's growth and new development initiatives in multiple jurisdictions across the U.S.
- Develop and execute strategies and tactics to advance business objectives and advocate Darden's policy positions through both direct and indirect lobbying
- Build and lead coalitions to further Darden's legislative and regulatory agenda
- Contribute to and provide regional expertise in the development of Darden's overall legislative and political outreach strategy
- Research, analyze and contribute to the proactive identification of policy impacting the casual and fine dining industry in general, and Darden Restaurants in particular
- Manage a team of outside consultants - acculturate goals and objectives, maintain accountability, regularly assess the need for new or additional support on key issues, and recruit as needed.
- Analyze, interpret, explain and make recommendations on complex legislative and intergovernmental public policy issues to a non-technical audience
- Work closely with operations leadership to bring government relations to life through grassroots engagement, training initiatives and direct interactions with local and state elected officials
- Represent Darden at multiple national organization meetings of state and local elected and appointed officials to further issue agendas and to build and enhance relationships
- Engage with industry peers and represent Darden with national and state business, trade, political and policy groups - serving on committees, taskforces, and boards as appropriate.
- Build awareness among internal stakeholders of key policy decisions and trends affecting the restaurant industry in the present and in the future
- Regularly engage with these stakeholders to analyze the impact of current and future legislative and regulatory issues/trends
- Research, develop, write and deliver Darden business priorities and issue positions in clear and convincing messages that are appropriate and compelling to various internal and external audiences
- Provide regular updates to internal subject matter experts and brand leaders that allow them to anticipate and accommodate policy changes to minimize negative impact and optimize positive benefits to the business
- Coordinate research and metrics measurement to provide qualitative and quantitative evaluation of regional reputation
- Identify and engage key opinion leaders within targeted markets and key community organizations and special interest groups whose involvement supports and strengthens local restaurant reputation leading to sales and guest count growth
- Work with industry representatives to host fund raising events for key legislative leaders

- Assist the Director of Government Relations in devising and managing state and local budgets and annual expenditures with emphasis on growth areas, reputation management and relationship building

REQUIRED TECHNICAL SKILLS:

- 5+ years progressive experience in government relations and state and local policy analysis or closely related work required
- Direct experience and personal knowledge of state level contribution and lobbying rules required
- Corporate, trade association, contract lobbying firm or interest group state government relations experience required
- Proven ability to maximize existing relationships with state and local officials required

REQUIRED EDUCATION:

- Bachelor's degree required (public/business administration, political science, public policy, communication or a closely related field)

OTHER KEY QUALIFICATIONS:

- Extraordinary ability to develop relationships with diverse individuals and audiences required
- Exemplary communication skills with both written and oral communications required
- Budget management experience required

PREFERRED SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE:

- Post-graduate degree preferred (MBA or related degree)
- Multiple state campaign and/or lobbying experience is a plus for this role
- Experience working in a state or local government legislative office preferred
- Experience in public communication including legislative testimony, internal newsletters, etc. preferred
- Experience in similar roles in multiple states preferred
- Working knowledge of state legislatures associations preferred

LOCATION:

- Position will reside in Orlando, FL
- 50-60 percent travel required