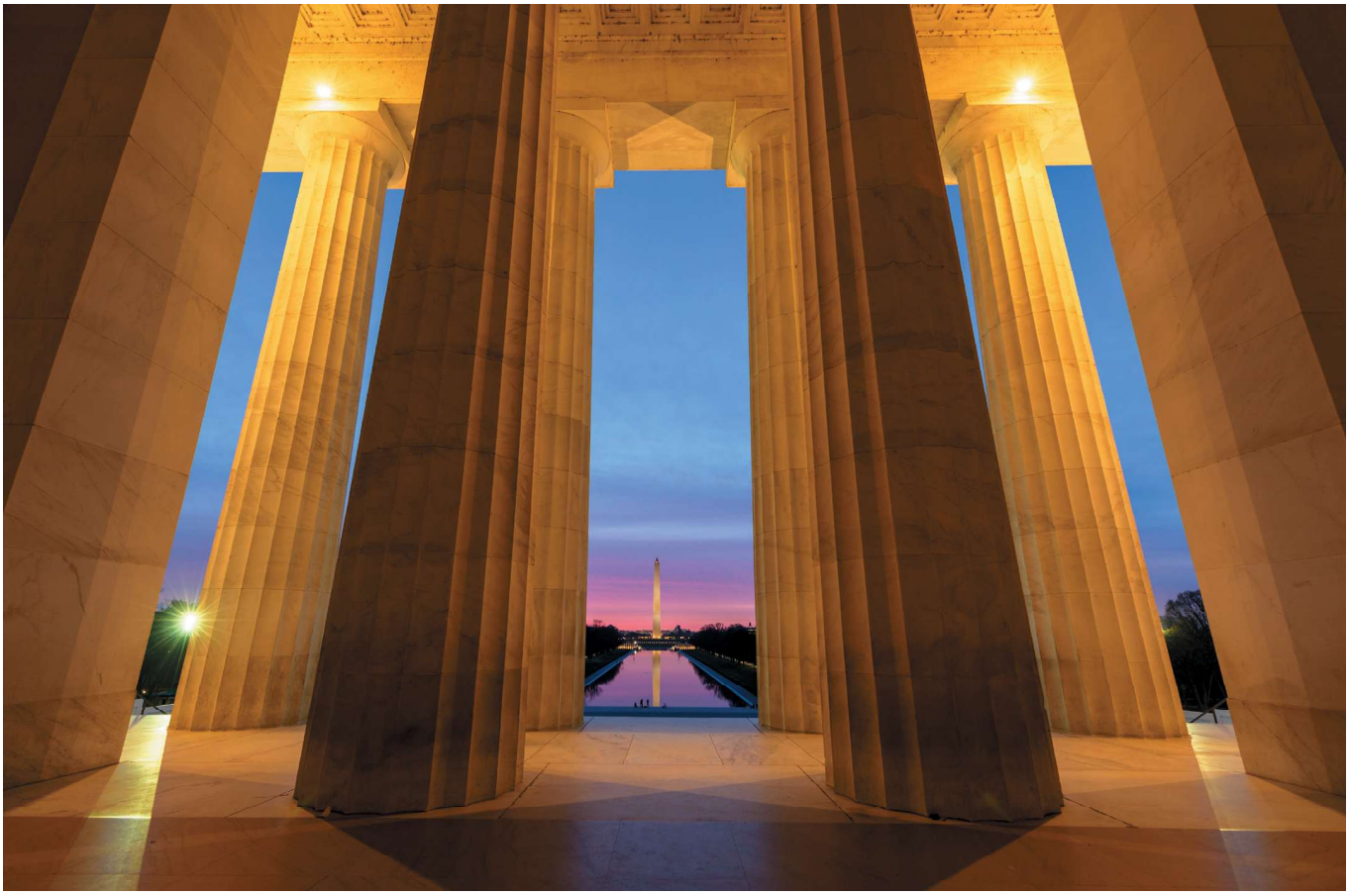
ON THE HILL

ADVOCACY AND LEGISLATION



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ADVOCACY AGENDA

Entering the Race

Insurance Campaign Institute prepares agents to run for office

By Nathan Riedel

The inaugural 2026 Insurance Campaign Institute demonstrated that independent insurance agents and brokers are uniquely positioned to serve as effective public officials—and that many are ready to answer the call.

Held April 20-21 at the Sofitel Washington DC, the program brought together insurance professionals from across the country for an intensive, nonpartisan training focused on running for public office and engaging more effectively in the political process. With 30 participants representing 14 states, including 24 independent agents, the Institute reflected growing interest among agents in stepping beyond advocacy and into elected leadership.

The Institute featured a lineup of nationally respected campaign strategists, communications experts, political consultants and elected officials, such as Indiana House Majority Floor Leader Matt Lehman. Sessions covered everything from campaign messaging and public speaking to fundraising, voter targeting, data analytics and artificial intelligence in campaigns. Participants also heard directly from experienced insurance professionals who have successfully transitioned into public office.

During the 2026 Big "I" Legislative Conference, Nathan Riedel, Big "I" senior vice president of federal government affairs, hosted a fireside chat with Insurance Cam-

paign Institute participants Jennifer Winkler and Kentucky State Representative Michael "Sarge" Pollock.

Winkler, owner of The Peeples Insurance Agency in Sarasota, Florida, is currently running as a candidate for the Florida House District 74 seat. She explained that her decision to run came out of "a perfect storm"—not the hurricanes that hit Florida's coast in prior years, but a moment when she realized the progress on reform could easily be undone.

"In the summer of 2025, I was at the FAIA Summer Leadership Conference in a legislative meeting with about 100 insurance nerds like me. We were celebrating real reform," she recalled. However, after learning that a dozen bills had been filed that could undo all that progress and that there was one insurance agent in the Florida House of Representatives, she decided that "we cannot go backward" and "needed to step up and take one for the team."

The other panelist, Kentucky State Representative Michael "Sarge" Pollock, was elected to represent the 51st District in 2021 and is an insurance agent with Jessie Insurance Agency in Campbellsville, Kentucky.

Similarly, Pollock "decided to stop complaining from the bleachers and get in the game," he said. "It's a big commitment, but it's incredibly rewarding."

"When I was first elected, there were only three insurance agents in the Kentucky General Assembly, and I was the only one deeply involved in property & casualty," he said. "I became the insurance voice. Not to run every bill, but to inform what those bills should look like."

The Insurance Campaign Institute's program was designed to equip insurance professionals with the practical tools and knowledge needed to launch and manage successful campaigns while balancing the realities of agency ownership, family commitments and public service.

Pollock noted that "the presenters were spot-on," he said. "Every one of them had real, hands-on experience."

"In 2021, I went through a campaign without anything like this," Pollock said. "If I'd had this training, it would've made everything easier."



Participants in the inaugural Insurance Campaign Institute.

Beyond the campaign skills and political strategy, the broader goal of the Insurance Campaign Institute is to encourage more independent insurance agents to become policymakers and trusted voices in government. Insurance impacts nearly every household and business in America, yet relatively few legislators have firsthand experience in the industry. As a result, lawmakers are often forced to make decisions about insurance markets, affordability, catastrophe response, litigation, taxes and regulation without the practical perspective of professionals who work directly with consumers every day.

Having more insurance professionals serve in elected office helps ensure that legislatures have informed decision-makers who understand how policy proposals affect consumers and local economies. At a time when voters increasingly want practical problem-solvers rather than partisan rhetoric, insurance agents can offer a grounded, solutions-oriented approach to leadership.

The enthusiasm generated by the inaugural event has already created momentum for the future. Organizers announced that the next Insurance Campaign Institute will be held April 5-6, 2027, in Washington, D.C., with plans to expand participation and continue developing the next generation of insurance industry leaders prepared to serve both their communities and the profession.

As legislative and regulatory challenges continue to shape the insurance marketplace, the Insurance Campaign Institute represents a new effort to ensure the industry has knowledgeable, experienced voices serving at every level of government. For many participants, the program was not simply about politics—it was about public service, leadership and protecting the future of the independent agency system.

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PARTNERS STEPPING UP

The event also highlighted the strong partnership between independent agents, carriers and industry stakeholders. The inaugural Insurance Campaign Institute was supported by:

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