The 2017 Annual Legislative Training Assembly (ALTA) invited attendees to engage in a review of the current media landscape and best practices for engaging with a variety of media sources. Bringing over thirty years of professional media experience to the session, communications and media specialist Nancy Heffernan shared her thoughts on current media trends, how legislators can control their message and maximize its impact, and their “rights” when being interviewed.

During the first portion of the session, attendees discussed why the media is important to the legislative environment, various reporting styles, and how to work with the media even when trust is in short supply. Insights included “care and feeding” instructions for building rapport with journalists, and descriptions of various reporting styles and how to identify them during an interview.

The second half of the session focused on ways to perfect personal presentation style through the use of interactive elements. For example, Ms. Heffernan staged a mock ambush by a reporter to demonstrate best practices for managing and responding to this type of interview while maintaining control of your message. To practice some of the suggestions made during the first part of the session, volunteers took the podium for a mock press conference. From the podium, legislators delivered their message and took questions from the audience, which acted as the press. Participants from both sides of the “press conference” actively participated in helping one another hone their interview skills.

Attendees departed the session with insights into the role the media play in delivering their legislative message, and tips on successful management of their media relationships.