



*A government relations proposal from*



Velocity Government Relations ("Velocity") welcomes the opportunity to support North Valley Military Institute (NVMI) by providing insight, intelligence, and analysis regarding the federal budget and Congressional activity to support their innovative charter school program for children from underserved communities in the Los Angeles Unified School District, who are in need of compassion, structure, and academic rigor.

In the past year and a half, underserved communities have been severely impacted by the global pandemic, perhaps more so than other communities. While some school districts had strong support systems in place that kept learning on track during lockdowns, others did not fare as well. COVID-19 has impacted all Americans, but over the past 21 months, many children have had already present challenges more greatly magnified. With most U.S. school districts re-starting in-person learning in fall 2021, some of the hardest hit areas are struggling to tackle academic regression and accelerate learning, while also addressing other more pressing issues, such as food insecurity, which negatively impacts a child's ability to learn. NVMI offers a special program that brings together educational opportunities, a sense of community, and military discipline. While the pandemic has shown the cracks in our educational system, NVMI has stepped up to ensure at-risk young people do not slip through the cracks, and are set up to face the challenges of adulthood, instead of entering the dark world of gangs and criminal behavior. At NVMI, parents have a set of duties to fulfill their role as the primary educators of their children, and the school supports parents and guardians with adult learning experiences to promote knowledge, skills, and dispositions of effective parenting. In this manner, NVMI helps to bring its lessons in hard work, determination, and a positive attitude back to the previous generation.

## **The Why**

Retired Navy Admiral, and head of U.S. Special Operations Command, William McRaven has spoken often about the fact K-12 education is a national security imperative. "Unless we are giving opportunity and a quality education to the young men and women in the United States, then we won't have the right people to be able to make the right decisions about our national security," McRaven said. We agree and welcome the opportunity to showcase to the Washington, DC, decision-maker community the specialized program

NVMI provides in the Los Angeles area, as you support and educate adolescents from underserved communities so that they have a fighting chance at a meaningful and productive adulthood. The mission of NVMI is to “develop leaders of character by providing a rigorous seven-year college preparatory program to promote excellence in the four pillars of academics, leadership, citizenship, and athletics.” This mission brings together a holistic approach in a community where many adults may not have not experienced this kind of robust education that can lift a person up from an economically disadvantaged start.

## **The How**

Velocity’s goal will be to support NVMI’s work by providing targeted insight into the right decision makers in Congress, and direction within policymakers in the administration, to ensure the success of NVMI is not lost in the shuffle, while also looking for creative funding solutions for your charter school program from across the federal sector. We will work to bring NVMI to the attention of Members of Congress and thought leaders inside the beltway, who may not be aware of the challenges faced by many young people on the other coast. Moreover, we will support your “ask” for additional federal funding to ensure your beloved school remains a permanent and stable place for children who have been raised in a state of instability.

## **The Legislative Branch**

The Congress is narrowly divided between the Republicans and Democrats. We will seek to build opportunities and relationships we have with both political parties as they focus on the importance of education. Although Congress has proposed increasing federal funding for K-12 schools, the pending FY2022 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill (passed by the House, not yet taken up in the Senate), which is the vehicle for funding the Charter Schools Program (CSP), currently contains a cut in CSP funding. Velocity is well situated to impact future federal funding levels for CSP, as well as other policy issues impacting federal charter schools. In advocating for CSP funding, we will use the philosophy of NVMI that ‘it is easier to raise a child to be a good citizen than to fix them after they have been broken.’ Early investments pay off multifold over the course of a person’s lifetime.

## **The Executive Branch**

During this engagement, Velocity Government Relations is prepared to be an additional set of eyes and ears for NVMI, informing you of key administration personnel changes, shifts in policies, budget investments, and capabilities, as well as potential opportunities for your charter school program. We will leverage our relationships within the administration to get you and the good news story about NVMI in the door, at the right time, with the right person. When new political appointments are made, we will work with your team to help to get new administration staff quickly up to speed on NVMI’s unique educational capabilities. When appropriate, we will provide expanded outreach to executive branch agencies and departments, such as the Departments of Defense and Education, all in order to bolster NVMI’s educational goals and mission.

## **Deliverables**

To begin our relationships, we suggest a half day strategy session with a team of your choosing so that we might collectively review what NVMI has done thus far with regard to federal outreach, where you want to go next, cross-reference Velocity’s relationships to your own, establish what are your short-, medium-

and longer-term needs, and establish how the Velocity team can best assist you in meeting these via regarding relationship building and advocacy in Washington.

On an ongoing basis, we strongly suggest one key meeting per week so that our team may receive information about priority areas of focus for NVMI, senior individuals for targeted outreach, and programmatic and policy areas of highest interest, and so that the Velocity team can provide feedback and plan how to chart a path forward. At this tag up, NVMI should also provide to Velocity counsel on which upcoming events are of the greatest interest for our team to track, monitor, and summarize to key individuals in the Executive Branch, Congress, and within the DC third party influencer community. Included in our deliverables is an in-depth weekly report with our analysis of the needs, wants, and outreach from the new administration, and actions by the Congress. Upon request, we will provide an outreach and contact plan – as well as specific contact information – for senior officials of interest to NVMI leadership.

## **Fees**

For Washington, DC, advocacy services, Velocity proposes that NVMI pay a retainer fee of \$3,000 per month. Please note, this is our non-profit “friends and family” rate as we are strong proponents of the school’s education mission. The proposed term for the agreement will be one year, beginning on January 1, 2022, and continuing through December 31, 2022. As with all Velocity contracts, termination is allowable at any time upon 30-days’ written notice by either party. All Velocity contracts are structured as monthly retainers, and are all-inclusive with the exception of expenses relating to out-of-town travel as requested and pre-approved by NVMI.

Terms accepted by Dr. Mark Ryan, Superintendent

## **About us**



27 Jan 22

Velocity Government Relations is a bipartisan government relations firm that helps aerospace companies deliver the right message at the right time to those key Washington, D.C. decision makers who oversee the space and defense industry. Partners draw on extensive scientific and technology policy backgrounds to study the labyrinth of complex technical issues, then identify and untangle the policy or political knots so new technologies can flourish and companies can succeed. Velocity’s expertise spans civil, commercial, military and intelligence programs. The firm’s executives are fluent in the languages of science, politics, federal bureaucracy, the military and commerce, with interpersonal skills and insider knowledge to move among constituencies and produce positive results for companies at all levels of maturity.

Velocity Government Relations was founded in December 2017 by Erin Neal, a policy expert for more than 20 years in civil, commercial, military and intelligence programs. In August 2019, just as the firm neared its two-year anniversary, Jo-Anne Sears joined the firm as a partner, bringing her own 20+ years national security experience with and within the intelligence community and industry so that she might provide clients with strategic guidance and communications efforts within the executive and legislative branches.

Both of Velocity’s partners maintain security clearances, and work exclusively with American companies in support of our country’s national security endeavors. Moreover, Velocity’s support of government clients allows for significant insight into the Department of Defense, the U.S. Air Force, and into the standing up of the new U.S. Space Force.

Velocity's current business portfolio includes Ad Astra Rocket Company, Air Force Research Laboratory via StiTec, Astroscale U.S., Atlas Space Operations, Ligado Networks, Innoveering, Office of the Secretary of the Air Force via SigmaTech, Questar, SAIC, and the Strategic Deterrent Coalition.

**Current clients.**

[Ad Astra](#)

[Astroscale U.S.](#)

[Atlas Space Operations](#)

[Innoveering](#)

[L3 Harris](#)

[Ligado Networks](#)

[NextGen Aero](#)

Queststar Concepts

[SAIC](#)

[SigmaTech](#)

[STI-TEC](#)

[Strategic Deterrent Coalition](#)

[Umbra](#)

*Points of contact available upon request*



**Erin Neal**  
**PARTNER**

Erin Neal is a space geek, a policy wonk, and a Washington insider. She helps Velocity's aerospace/defense and space tech clients influence key decision makers and conduct successful business development with the federal government.

Erin leverages two significant advantages as she deftly navigates the Washington policy landscape on behalf of publicly traded and privately held companies, nonprofits, trade associations, and coalitions. First is her unique background in both science and policy. Erin can translate technical language into policy speak, and vice versa. She crafts effective messaging and delivers it to the right person at the right

time for maximum impact.

Her second advantage is her reputation as a trusted advisor. Erin has cultivated strong bipartisan relationships for two decades with senior officials in the national security, space, and intelligence communities throughout the Executive Branch, Congress, and industry. Highlights include:

- Single-handily developed a space policy practice from scratch for SIGNAL Group, a respected Washington advocacy and communications firm. She advanced the lawmaking, regulatory, and business development interests of the aerospace/defense industry's most established players (Boeing, Raytheon) as well as entrepreneurial entrants (Ligado, Planet Labs, Virgin Galactic).
- Directed government relations for Orbital ATK (now Northrup Grumman Innovation Systems). Erin led successful industry efforts to pass watershed legislation that modernized export controls on commercial U.S. satellites.
- Served as Ball Aerospace corporate liaison to NASA and NOAA. She directed all legislative initiatives for civilian and commercial satellite programs. Erin also coordinated industry efforts to run a final servicing mission to the Hubble Space Telescope in the wake of the Space Shuttle Columbia tragedy.
- Served on the staff of Sen. Bill Nelson and two members of the U.S. House of Representatives. Erin directed Sen. Nelson's legislative strategy for all issues before the Budget Committee and the Commerce Subcommittees on Aviation and Science, Space, and Technology.
- Served as policy analyst for the biggest players in the aerospace field, including the Congressional Research Service, National Academy of Sciences, NASA headquarters, and Space Policy Institute.
- Conducted original space research at the University of Texas at Dallas, Arecibo Observatory in Puerto Rico, and at the Lunar and Planetary Institute adjacent to Johnson Space Center in Houston.

Erin holds an M.A. in International Science, Technology and Public Policy from The George Washington University and a B.S. in physics from Centenary College of Louisiana.

Giving back is part of her ethos. Erin is the Washington Space Business Roundtable president and serves on the Board of Directors for the Planetary Sciences Institute, Advanced Nuclear Weapons Alliance, and National Institute for Lobbying Ethics. She served on the American Astronautical Society board and was past president of both the National Space Club and Women in Aerospace, which recognized her for her dedication to the organization's interests.

Erin taught math and science as a Peace Corp volunteer in Cameroon, Central Africa. She leads a Girl Scout troop focused on STEM, community service, and the great outdoors. She also serves on the STEM steering committee for Girl Scout Council of the Nation's Capital. When not engaged in concerns beyond the atmosphere, Erin enjoys her West Virginia hideaway with her husband and two children.



**Jo-Anne Sears**  
**PARTNER**

Jo-Anne Sears is a master communicator at the highest levels of policymaking in Washington. She wields her subject matter expertise and access to decision makers on behalf of Velocity's aerospace/defense, intelligence, and space tech clients to influence laws and regulations and conduct successful business development with federal agencies.

Jo-Anne's impeccable timing means that clients get their voices heard at crucial policymaking stages, using the communications tools that will make the strongest impact—from private face-to-face meetings to domestic and foreign media outlets, digital and social media technologies, media training, talking points, speeches, and harnessing the 24-hour news cycle to augment messaging goals.

Jo-Anne's strategic instincts developed over 20+ years as a trusted communications and public affairs advisor in the national security community. She crafted effective policy messaging and crisis communications for the White House, Secretary of State, Secretary of the Air Force, real-world intelligence and military operations, and entrepreneurial defense and space tech companies, among others. Highlights include:

- Served as senior strategic communications advisor to the Secretary of the Air Force and the Principal Space Advisor. Jo-Anne ensured that strategic engagements, policy, and messaging supported the Air Force mission through interactions with Congress, the White House, National Space Council, Federal Aviation Administration, NASA, NOAA, intelligence agencies, think tanks, and the media.
- Learned the culture and language of Congress and the value of a bipartisan approach by advocating for defense and intelligence agency and private industry positions before the Senate and House Armed Services Committees, Senate and House Select Committees on Intelligence, and the House and Senate appropriations defense subcommittees (funding).
- Earned a meritorious service award in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks for her support of the White House and Secretary of State Colin Powell as State Department press secretary and spokesperson with expertise in counter terrorism, diplomatic security, and Central Asia.

- Served as intelligence subject matter expert for Project Liberty, the fixed-wing ISR (intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance) platform directed by Secretary of Defense Robert Gates. Drafted and edited the security agreement to ensure the MC-12 could fly in contested air space.

Jo-Anne holds an M.A. in Organizational Change Management, with Distinction, from Hawaii Pacific University and a B.A. in Communications and English, Cum Laude, from Marist College.

Her upbringing in a military family instilled in Jo-Anne the importance of public service. She is a member of the Intelligence and National Security, Women in Aerospace, and a colonel in the Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels Inc., the highest title of honor bestowed by the Governor of Kentucky in recognition of an individual's outstanding service to community, state, and nation.

Jo-Anne leads a STEM-focused Girl Scout troop. She is a member of the Junior League of Hampton Roads and a board member of the McLean Ladies Development Association, which mentors women leaders. Jo-Anne seeks to preserve the great outdoors for future generations through her membership in the Isaak Walton League of America.



**Elizabeth Lewis**  
**DIRECTOR**

Elizabeth recently joined the Velocity team in October 2021. Although she was raised in Southern California, she has spent her entire professional life in the Washington, D.C. area. Elizabeth is a Capitol Hill veteran with experience working for the Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee. She possesses a developed sense of discernment, decision-making skills, significant project management capabilities, team development, and budget management obtained during years of family management and involvement with local businesses and charity groups.

During her most recent time on Capitol Hill, Elizabeth was a strategist and legislative analyst, where she established partnerships with senior-level policy makers and key Appropriations staff, California delegation staff, and local, state, and federal officials to secure federal funding and grants for district and California state projects. While working in the Chairman's office, she focused much of her time on the VA, HUD, and Independent Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee, which then included NASA, while also managing his transportation and trade issues, with particular attention to the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach and the commercial reuse of the former Norton Air Force Base.

Elizabeth has her real estate license, and also serves on the Founders Auxiliary Board of Children's National Hospital. She holds a B.A. in Philosophy and Business/Economics from Wheaton College (IL). Elizabeth, her husband, and their children reside in Alexandria, Virginia.

---





**Robyn Arnould**  
**SENIOR ASSOCIATE**

Robyn joined the Velocity team in April 2021. As a Senior Associate, she leverages her training and experience in policy development, non-profit organization, and political campaigns to support Velocity's clients. Her prior experience as an intern in the U.S. Senate provides her insight into the legislative process and federal government culture, while also igniting in her a passion for supporting programs that improve the daily lives of Americans. Her previous work in the Senate has cultivated in Robyn an eye for effective messaging and legislative research.

While working on her undergraduate degree, she also volunteered on several local political campaigns, which further developed her desire to contribute to the political process. After graduation, Robyn honed her communication and organizational skills while completing an Ambassadorship at the United Way.

Robyn is passionate about leveraging technology to solve today's challenges and translating issues encountered in the space and defense arenas for broad application.

Robyn graduated Magna Cum Laude from Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio, with an H.A.B in Philosophy, Politics and the Public and a B.A. in History.

---