Effectively Using Your Voice to Make a Difference

NMAG 72017 Annual Joint Conference
Advocacy

– Identifying, embracing, and promoting a cause.

– Advocacy can influence public opinion as well as public policy.

– “Who can I talk to today to advance our mission?”
Common Attributes Nonprofits & Government

- Community-based problem solving
- Form and rely on wide community networks
- Follow rules of accountability and transparency
- Seek ways to leverage financial and human resources
- Supported by people who believe in particular causes

We should be natural partners, right?
It’s all about

Relationships
Why Relationships are Important

- You will become a trusted resource
  - *You want them to call you, not just call you back*
- You will build trust and credibility
  - *Don’t ask a stranger for a favor*
- They will both listen and hear what you say
  - *Silence is acquiescence*
- You can work together to solve problems
How Elected Officials Decide

• Life experience
• World view
• Personal knowledge of the issue
• Information from a trusted source
• Community opinion leaders
• Views of their constituents
• Gut feeling of what’s right
Learn About Your Elected Officials

- District number/areas represented
- Political party and values
- Professional background
- Personal interests and family
- Where they give or volunteer

And the Cycles of Their Process

- Procedure for a bill to become a law
- Budget timeline and input process
- Opportunities for public comment at meetings
Becoming a Trusted Source

Educate elected officials about what you do

• Invite them to visit your nonprofit
• Meet them where they are
  – Individual appointments
  – Public comment times at meetings
• Invite them to your special events
• Send them your newsletter
Becoming a Trusted Source

Provide opportunities for Elected Officials to expand their own networks and talk about their priorities

• Meeting your board, volunteers, donors, constituents

• “Meet and greet” with your network

• Forum on your issues
Importance of Relationships

Source: Pinterest
Using Relationships to Communicate

• Strategically select a spokesperson
• Make your “ask” direct and succinct
• Activate network connections
  – Content is more important than volume
  – Show breadth and depth of your supporters, genuinely and respectfully
Endowment Tax Credit

Republican view
- Smaller government
- Individual choice
- Local control
- Favored causes
- Disfavored causes

Democratic view
- Direct appropriations
- Public services publicly funded
- Community Building
- Favored causes

Policy balance: individual choices to invest in favored causes, and these private choices fund organizations that provide or directly support publicly funded services
Messaging tips

• Give local facts
  – District, city, neighborhood
• Quantify impact
  – Give scope and significance to the issue
• Share personal stories
  – Bring a client or person impacted
  – Anecdotes, quotes, testimony, etc.
An Official’s FAQs

- What does your organization do?
- How does this work (or issue) affect the people I represent?
- What is your position (or perspective) on this issue? Why?
- What are the benefits and costs of this policy?
- Who is for or against this policy? Why?
- What are you asking me to do?
501(c)(3)- Lobbying & Political Rules

Nonprofits can’t support or oppose candidates for elected public office.

Nonprofits can lobby but limited to either:
- an “insubstantial part” of activities; or
- a set percentage of expenditures based on budget size - 501(h) election.
**“Insubstantial Part” vs. “Expenditure” (501h)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Insubstantial Part Limit</strong></th>
<th><strong>Expenditure Limit</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Activity-based</td>
<td>• Expenditure-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Time + expenditures</td>
<td>– Paid time + expenditures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lobbying must be insubstantial, which is not defined</td>
<td>• Lobbying must be less than set % of total expenditures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Depends on 990-reported facts and circumstances</td>
<td>• Depends on 990-reported budget size</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 501(h) election

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget size</th>
<th>Total annual expenditures that may be spent on lobbying.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up to $500,000</td>
<td>$100,000 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$500,000 to $1,000,000</td>
<td>$100,000 + 15% of expenditures over $500,000.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1,000,000 to $1,500,000</td>
<td>$175,000 + 10% of expenditures over $1,000,000.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1,500,000 to $17,000,000</td>
<td>$225,000 + 5% of expenditures over $1,500,000.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over $17,000,000</td>
<td>$1,000,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lobbying Resources

• National Council of Nonprofits
  http://www.councilofnonprofits.org/nonprofit-advocacy/power-information

• Alliance for Justice
  Bolderadvocacy.org

• Nonprofit Voter Engagement Network
  (www.nonprofitvote.org)

• Colorado Nonprofit Association
  – Speak for Yourself toolkit
Nonprofits of Influence

- Community-wide networks
- Silence is acquiescence
- Levers
- Relationships
- Our cause is just