SCIENCE POLICY & Advocacy Roles

In the US Congress

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ADVOCACY APPROACHES

**Inside** - “working with”
- Working in the context of existing values and priorities
- Consulting
- Relationship building

**Outside** – pushing change
- Protests
- Petitions
- Media for public opinion

**Communications**: Applicable for both
- Framing the issue
- Conveying values
ADVOCACY DEFINITIONS

Advocacy
- Supporting or defending a cause or an issue
- e.g., recommending support of evidence-based prevention programs

Education
- Unbiased information to general public or public officials
- e.g., research on evidence-based prevention programs
- e.g., information about legislation, but make no recommendation for action

Lobbying
- A specific type of advocacy activity
- Seeks to influence the enactment or defeat of pending legislation
- e.g., asking a legislator to vote a certain way

- While ALL lobbying is advocacy, NOT ALL advocacy is Lobbying.
AVOIDING THE SLIPPERY SLOPE

**Lobbying Regulations** – the use of certain resources

- 501(c)3 non-profits
- Government employees
- Federally funded research

**Citizen Rights**

- Freedom of speech
- Advocate with your elected officials
  - When you’re not on paid time
  - Using personal, voluntary resources (e.g., computer; travel)
HONEST BROKER

Recommendations

1. Focus on the issues and evidence
2. Provide a menu of policy *options* (that have bipartisan appeal)
3. Describe legislation objectively (not your opinion)
4. Describe how evidence does or does not align with specific legislation
• Replicable implementation model
• A feasible and efficient pathway for timely policy engagement
  • Identify opportunities
  • Minimize logistical burden
  • In-depth T/A for responses
• Effectiveness studied with RCT
  • More legislation with evidence language
  • Greater value of using research to understand how to think about problems (i.e., conceptual)
• Researchers report benefits

https://www.research2policy.org/researcher-sign-up
GOVERNMENT RELATIONS OFFICE

• Represents the University interests; e.g.,
  ○ Research funding
  ○ Higher education
    • Regulation
    • Funding

• Occasionally consult with policy-engaged researchers; e.g.,
  ○ Policymaker requests
  ○ Representing the university

• Typically do not have the capacity to broker by:
  ○ Identifying broad policy opportunities
  ○ Connecting the right researcher at the right time
### COMMITTEES VS CAUCUSES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Committee</th>
<th>Caucus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Official legislative process</td>
<td>o Informal organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Members are assigned</td>
<td>o Voluntary affiliation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Jurisdiction</td>
<td>o Legislators have similar policy concerns</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Marks up legislation</td>
<td>o Discuss issues, perform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Conducts hearings</td>
<td>legislative research, and make</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>policy plans</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Most bills die in committee*

See RPC Policy Process Brief
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jurisdiction</th>
<th>House Committee</th>
<th>Senate Committee</th>
<th>Example Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food Subsidies</td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry</td>
<td>SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare Programs</td>
<td>Ways &amp; Means: Energy &amp; Commerce</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Medicaid/Medicare: CHIP (Children's Health Insurance Program)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Financial Assistance</td>
<td>Ways &amp; Means</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Assistance</td>
<td>Ways &amp; Means</td>
<td>Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs</td>
<td>Section 8 / Federal Housing Assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Services</td>
<td>Ways &amp; Means</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Social Services Block Grant (Title XX)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare &amp; Education</td>
<td>Education and the Workforce</td>
<td>Health, Education, Labor and Pensions</td>
<td>Head Start; Child Care and Development Fund; Title I (e.g., low-income schools)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vocational Education</td>
<td>Education and the Workforce</td>
<td>Health, Education, Labor and Pensions</td>
<td>Job Corps; Pell Grants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Abuse Prevention</td>
<td>Education and the Workforce</td>
<td>Health, Education, Labor and Pensions</td>
<td>CAPTA; Community Based Child Abuse Prevention Block Grants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juvenile Justice</td>
<td>Judiciary: Education and the Workforce</td>
<td>Judiciary</td>
<td>JABG (Juvenile Accountability Block Grant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster Care</td>
<td>Ways &amp; Means</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Social Security, Title IV-E (foster care)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Trafficking</td>
<td>Judiciary; Foreign Affairs; Energy and Commerce</td>
<td>Foreign Relations</td>
<td>TVPA (Trafficking Victims Protection Act)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Ways & Means is one of the oldest and prestigious Committees*

*Appropriations Committees are crucial to discretionary funding*

See RPC Policy Process Brief
PERSONAL OFFICES

Staffers
- This is who you will meet
- Don’t underestimate their influence
- Gatekeepers and bill writers
- Portfolios: Each staff is assigned to handle an issue area
- Customer service role for constituents and stakeholders (i.e., they’re typically nice)
- Average age <35
- Rotating door

Constituent meetings
- “All policy is local”
- Legislators are elected to serve their districts / states
- Very interested in local:
  - Problems / stories
  - Initiatives, orgs, successes
  - Your research
  - Your concerns and opinions
INTERACTING WITH OFFICES

**Brief emails**
- 2-3 sentences
- Bullet points
- Ask for a meeting
- Be persistent

**Relationship Development**
- Active listening
- Policy neutral (fact over opinion)
- Reinforce values/beliefs (don’t challenge)
- Transparency
  - Funding source / special interests
  - Limitations in expertise
- Offer to help

**Meeting Tips**
- Don’t stress – this is not as high stakes as one might think
- Bring:
  - Business cards & notepad
  - Comfortable shoes
- Focus on
  - Key point (singular)
  - Follow-up steps
- Be Flexible
- Express gratitude
- Follow-up Email

See RPC Meet Legislators Brief
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