Community Advocacy: An Essential Component of Community Action

Embracing Change – A Community Action Symposium
Thursday, September 22, 2016

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Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center
About the Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center (PBPC)

We are a Harrisburg-based nonpartisan, statewide policy research project that provides independent, credible analysis on state tax, budget, and related policy matters, with attention to the impact of current or proposed policies on working families.

www.pennbpc.org
GETTING STARTED
Why is advocacy important given the time required in light of other organizational commitments?

- Politics happens on more than Election Day
- Advocacy not optional for community action
- Get over your fears
- Grassroots advocacy makes a difference
How does an organization get started doing grassroots advocacy?
How does an organization get started doing grassroots advocacy?

• Assign a staff person to lead
• Decide what legislative action you (and other organizations like your cares about)
• Join the budget coalition PA choice to get
  • Information
  • Allies and mutual support
  • Partner in actions
• Express your views
• Do grassroots advocacy
  • Build a base
  • Activate it
How do you effectively communicate your agency’s stance on a particular issue to policy decision-makers, the media, and the public?
How do you engage the press?

Harrisburg GOP is playing games with the state budget

By Keith Collins

Top Republicans in Harrisburg have turned a game of chicken over the state budget. While Gov. Tom Wolf is fighting to restore school funding and property tax relief for the middle class, the GOP’s leaders are digging in their heels to stop severance tax on natural gas drillers. The people of Pennsylvania deserve better.

As a pastor, I believe that state budgets are more than financial documents. They represent the moral decisions of our leaders. This year, the Wolf administration has presented a budget that is fair and progressive. The House and Senate, on the other hand, have presented budgets that are full of giveaways to special interests.

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How do you engage the press?

- Media releases
- Earned media events
- Submitted content
- Website / social media
- Relationships with reporters
What are some of the basics for delivering a compelling message?
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• Elevator speech
  • What we do and **why** we do it
• Advocacy message
  • Goals > Problem > Solution
  • Give an example; tell a story
  • Keep it simple
  • Repetition
  • Visuals and locations that reinforce your message
• Schedule at the right time
What are some things you should NEVER do?
What are some things you should NEVER do?

• Lie or be less than forthright, distorting facts or only telling half the truth
• Guess when you don’t know the answer
• Waste a reporter’s time by being late or failing to follow through as promised
• Allow someone who was not vetted or approved in advance to take the microphone at an earned media event
• Publicly attack a reporter or a media outlet
SOCIAL MEDIA
What’s the role of social media in an advocacy campaign?
What’s the role of social media in an advocacy campaign?

• In addition to the mass media, it is a means of educating the public and raising awareness.

• It can be a way of mobilizing people to take action.

• It is also a way of engaging with decision makers.
Pledge TODAY to Phone Your State Legislators During Monday's PA Budget "Call To Action"

I will join others across PA and take 5-10 minutes on Monday, 6/27 to call my state senator & representative about the state budget.

2,101 people reached
Sally Jo Snyder @pittsburgh653 · Apr 6

#NameTheCuts No resources to live well and in community heightens the impact of isolation @RepReedPA @RepTomMurt
Lawmakers need to pass a #pabudget w/ the funding our schools need & students deserve. Or they must #namethecuts
Adam Nester @AdamNester · Apr 6
@PADems @PAGOP #NametheCuts in #humanservices for the 1.1M adults under 65 w/ a disability in the 2016-2017 budget goo.gl/50B8pn

Joseph Rogers @jar08034 · Apr 6
@senatorscarnati
The 2012 #pabudget cuts hurt, forcing #mentalhealth programs to close! We want rev not cuts #NameTheCuts @PAHouseGOP

Stephanie Jamison @sbarrettjamison · Apr 6
Pennsylvanians support revenue increases to avoid cuts to vital #mentalhealth services #NameTheCuts @PAHouseGOP @PaHouseDems
What are the downsides of social media for advocacy?

• It does not magically replace traditional advocacy.

• It takes time to build social media “muscle”, requiring investment of money & staff time.

• Social media advocacy can backfire, mobilizing opponents who can hijack a hashtag.

• Awareness ≠ Action.
Go ahead. Meme me!

Bill Cosby posted a photo of himself on Twitter Monday afternoon inviting the Internet to meme him. The entire thing was eventually deleted when fans used the web tool to highlight past accusations against Cosby.
In reply to PA Budget and Policy

Rep. Stephen Bloom @RepBloom · Apr 6
Maybe it’s time for @PBPC and @GovernorTomWolf to #NameTheTaxes they’re demanding from the hardworking taxpayers of PA? #NameTheTaxes

Rep. Stephen Bloom @RepBloom · Apr 6
So @GovernorTomWolf will officially drop his push for personal income and sales tax hikes? @PBPC #NameTheTaxes
VOLUNTEERS & SUPPORTERS
How do you mobilize community members or volunteers?
Who do you ask?

- Clients
- Staff
- Family
- Friends
- Voters: the voter file
How do you ask?

- Don’t be afraid: You are providing a service
- Make a specific ask
- Explain what you want the result to be
- Follow-up with what results
- Keep asking
- Show people that they are part of something larger than themselves: individual and collective
- Move people up the ladder of activism
Where do you ask?

- Fliers at your office
- Table at events
- Send an email
- Join a phone bank
- Knock on doors
LEGISLATORS
What are the keys to organizing a successful meeting with a legislator?

- Legislator or staff?
- Elevator speech
- Make a specific ask for support of legislation / spending request
- Say how it will make a difference; tell stories
- Say you are willing to pay for it
- Support one another in your coalition
- Ask for commitment
- Have a 1 page hand out
- Follow-up
SUCCESS!
What does success look like? How do you demonstrate success to your board and your organization’s supporters?

- Winning is important
- Almost always do win something
- Rarely win everything
Thank you!

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