



The World of Politics: Shaping the Future of the Nation's Regional Councils

SERDI Executive Directors Training

September 8, 2008



Presentation Overview

- Why should you and your regional council be involved in federal and state advocacy
- Understanding the political landscape and the unique role of regional councils
- Strategies and techniques for becoming an effective communicator and grassroots leader



A Sense of Politics...

- "Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it everywhere, diagnosing it incorrectly, and applying the wrong remedies." -- Groucho Marx
- "Freedom is hammered out on the anvil of discussion, dissent, and debate." -- Voltaire
- "History is made by passionate minorities... not passive majorities." -- Unknown



“Amateurs built the Arc, while professionals built the titanic!”

- **National and state organizations need professional lobbyists** to develop strategies, understand timing of actions, deal with specific language and coordinate grassroots networks
- **HOWEVER, grassroots networks** add raw political power, local credibility & you are voters / constituents!



Major Element #1:

Why should you and your regional council be involved in federal and state advocacy



Why should regional councils be involved?

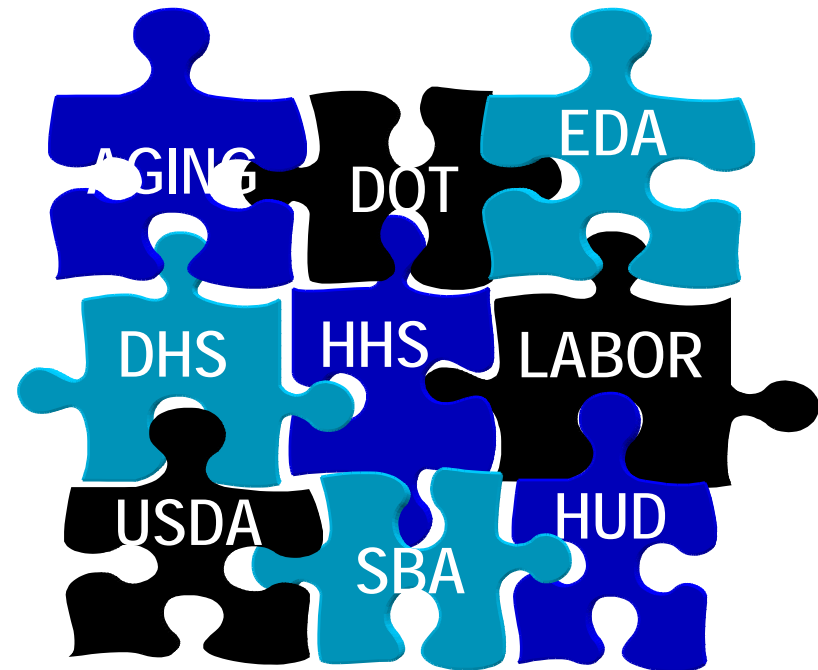
- Federal government spends more than \$3 trillion annually, including more than \$500 billion in domestic assistance programs
- Federal policies – including unfunded mandates -- have direct and lasting impact on regional councils, local governments & local communities
- Devolution of responsibility will continue to accelerate and pressure local constituencies



Why should regional councils be involved?

■ Because Federal and State Policy Officials Determine Funding for Your Organizations...

- Sources of Funding:
- ◆ 45% Federal Sources
 - ◆ 25% State Sources
 - ◆ 15% Local Dues
 - ◆ 15% Other





Aligning Priorities for Win-Win Partnership

■ Federal and State Elected Officials

- ◆ #1 Priority is to win election!
- ◆ #2 Priority is to win re-election!
- ◆ #3 Priority:
See #1 & #2 Priorities!

■ Regional Councils

- ◆ Priority is to foster intergovernmental and regional cooperation, support economic development and improve quality of life within region



**The Key to Your Success
is to Link the Self-Interests and
Priorities of Your Public Officials
with Your Organization's
Interests and Mission!**



Keys to Success for Regional Councils

- **You must make the effort;** No one else cares as much about your organization as you!
 - ◆ As Yogi Berra said, "You have to give 100 percent in the first half of the game. If that isn't enough, in the 2nd half, you have to give what is left."
- **Become a trusted partner** who delivers on promises and **delivers a high-quality product**
- **Play politics, *but never partisan politics!***



Keys to Success for Regional Councils

- **Networks of Local Elected Officials**, as well as Private Sector, Nonprofit and Education Partners
- **Knowledge** of Federal Community and Economic Development Programs
- **Intermediary** between political leaders and practitioners – ***You are part of intergovernmental process!***



Keys to Success for Regional Councils

■ However, You Must Tell Your Story...

- ◆ Regular Visits and Face-to-Face Meetings
- ◆ Web Sites... *Making A First Impression!*
- ◆ Statewide Impact Reports and Power Points
- ◆ Annual Report with Humanized Stories & Impact
- ◆ Professionally-Designed Newsletters and Reports
- ◆ Informed Board Members and Partners to Reinforce Your Message and Credibility



Keys to Success for Regional Councils

- **The most powerful tools in the regional council business remain:**
 - ◆ Personal relationships
 - ◆ Timely, concise and valued communications
 - ◆ Trust building



Major Element #2:

Evaluating the Political Climate and Landscape



Who has the power and control over your organization and future?

**This is your target audience and primary
focus ... executive agencies and state
legislatures, local governments, etc**



Evaluating the Political Landscape

- What are the interests of political leaders
- What messages resonate with leaders and how do your programs match their priorities
- How can you overcome money in politics
- How do you maintain professional relationships
- How do you prepare for transition of new policy makers and Hill staff turnover

Pyramid of Political Power

**Family
& Close
Personal Friends**

**Supporters Who Get
Others to Volunteer Time**

**Financial Contributors Who
Secure Additional Contributions**

**Campaign Volunteers and Constituents
Who Contribute Financially**

Supportive Voters

Registered Voters

Non-Voting Age Population

**Trusted and
Knowledgeable
Constituent on
Specific Issues**

**** Average of 646,946 People per Congressional District ****



Overcoming money in politics

- Estimated \$540 million spent on all elections in the US in 1976 – rising to \$3.9 billion in 2000
- HOWEVER, in 1996, the nation's two leading commercial advertisers, Proctor & Gamble and General Motors, spent more -- \$5 billion -- to promote their products than was spent on all US elections

Source: Congressional Research Service



Cost of Admission to Congress

■ US House of Representatives

- ✧ **1976 Cycle:** \$87,000 average cost per candidate
- ✧ **2000 Cycle:** \$847,000 average cost per candidate
- ✧ **2006 Cycle:** \$1.3 Million average cost per candidate
 - Typical Representative must raise \$12,686 per week over 104-week, two-year election cycle

Based on Data from OpenSecrets.org



Cost of Admission to Congress

■ United States Senate

- ✧ **1976 Cycle:** \$609,000 average per candidate
- ✧ **2000 Cycle:** \$7.2 million average per candidate
- ✧ **2006 Cycle:** \$8.99 million average per candidate
 - Typical Senate candidate must raise \$28,831 per week over 312-week, six-year cycle

Based on Data from OpenSecrets.org



Most Expensive Senate Races in 2006

- | | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| 1. | <u>New York</u> | \$57,475,195 |
| 2. | <u>Pennsylvania</u> | \$46,570,931 |
| 3. | <u>Connecticut</u> | \$41,023,447 |
| 4. | <u>Missouri</u> | \$35,183,631 |
| 5. | <u>Tennessee</u> | \$33,163,416 |

Source: OpenSecrets.org



Most Expensive House Races in 2006

1.	<u>Florida District 13</u>	\$11,391,582
2.	<u>Illinois District 8</u>	\$9,443,324
3.	<u>Florida District 22</u>	\$8,907,385
4.	<u>New Mexico District 1</u>	\$8,300,854
5.	<u>Illinois District 6</u>	\$8,007,006
6.	<u>Pennsylvania District 6</u>	\$7,473,384
7.	<u>Ohio District 15</u>	\$7,043,853
8.	<u>California District 11</u>	\$7,010,664
9.	<u>Connecticut District 4</u>	\$6,913,092
10.	<u>Minnesota District 6</u>	\$6,892,845

Source: OpenSecrets.org



How can we overcome money in politics



Oversight of
EDA, TEA-21, FEMA,
Corp of Engineers & EPA

Rep. Don Young (R-AK),
Ranking Member, House
Transportation Committee

- 2003 Fundraising: \$1.5 Million
- Only 6 Donors From Alaska Gave More Than \$200 – Including US Senator – Out of 350 Total Major Donors



Major Element #3:

**The Mechanics of Federal
Grassroots Advocacy and
Relationship Building**



Most Effective Means of Communication

- | | | |
|-----------|----------------------------|-------------|
| 1. | Grassroots Activity | 52 % |
| 2. | Lobbying by Executives | 27 % |
| 3. | Campaign Contributors | 5 % |
| 4. | Professional Lobbyists | 4 % |
| 5. | Advocacy Advertising | 2 % |

Source: Public Affairs Council Survey



Washington's Power 15: Grassroots Connections

1. National Rifle Association
2. AARP
3. National Federation of Independent Businesses
4. American Israel PAC
5. Association of Trial Lawyers of America
6. AFL-CIO
7. US Chamber of Commerce
8. National Beer Wholesalers Association
9. National Association of Realtors
10. National Association of Manufacturers
11. National Association of Home Builders
12. American Medical Association
13. American Hospital Association
14. National Education Association
15. American Farm Bureau Federation

Source: Fortune Magazine



**What messages resonate
with policy makers and how do you
market your core programs and projects**

Bottom line:

Need to modify and tailor messages
to your target audience



Key Activities to Building Relationships

- Cultivate Newly Elected Members (Before the election, during transition & immediately after election)
- Identify Local Connections to Lawmakers & Staff
- Schedule Visits and Tours of Projects
- Assist in Development of New Ideas & Initiatives (Match issues to committee assignments)
- Invite to meetings, board events and announcements



Ideas for Establishing Credibility

1. Tours of Successful Projects

- ◆ Lower Savannah COG with Sen. Lindsey Graham
- ◆ NW Alabama COG with Rep. Robert Aderholt

2. Provide timely, concise & useful information

- ◆ Always provide 1-page summary
- ◆ Senator Session's staff on DRA issues
- ◆ Statewide COG impact reports and power points



Ideas for Establishing Credibility

3. Ask “independent” constituents to tell your story

- ◆ Aging constituents, workforce trainees, banks, etc
- ◆ Alabama state aging director attends Hill visits

4. Give Thanks and Praise

- ◆ NADO Congressional Partnership Awards
- ◆ Thank You Note after Each Meeting / Action



How Can Your Lawmakers Help You?

- ✓ Introduce or Cosponsor Legislation
- ✓ Sponsor / Sign Dear Colleague Letter on Issue
- ✓ Vote on a Bill or Amendment in Committee or on Floor
- ✓ Send Letters to Federal Agencies on Specific Issues
- ✓ Support Letter for Federal Grant Applications
- ✓ Talk with Committee Chairman or Congressional Leadership about Local Issues

Understanding the Legislative Timeline: Schedule for FY2009 Budget & Appropriations

- April – June 2007
Federal Agencies Submit Requests to Departments and OMB
- August – October 2007
OMB Reviews and Provides Pass Back
- November – December 2007
Agency Appeals and Final WH Decisions
- January – February 2008
President’s State of the Union Address and Release of President’s Budget
- March – April 2008
Project Earmark Requests Due
- February – May 2008
Congress Develops Concurrent Budget Resolution (Non-binding Blueprint for Spending and Taxes) and Appropriators Hold Hearings on President’s Budget
- June - July 2008
12 Appropriations Subcommittees and Full Committee Unveil Spending Bills
- September – October 2008
Floor Debates on 12 Spending Bills and House-Senate Conference Committees
- October 1, 2008
Start of New Fiscal Year – FY2009



Political Dynamics of Your Delegation

- House and Senate Member Relations
- Committee Assignments & Division of Labor to Cover Issues / Use Influence
- Fall Out from Redistricting Fights
- Personal Relationships and Friendships
- Partisan Divides



Major Element #4:

Using the Advocacy Communications Toolbox



Evaluate Impact of Communication Tools

■ Direct Methods

- ◆ Personal Visits
- ◆ Phone Calls
- ◆ Letters and faxes
- ◆ Email
- ◆ Project Tour and Ribbon Cuttings
- ◆ Events and Conferences

■ Indirect Methods

- ◆ Op-Eds
- ◆ Editorials
- ◆ Paid Ads on tv, radio and print
- ◆ 3rd Party Support or Endorsement



Communicating with policy makers...
Think about the ends before
you think about the means!



Highest Ranked Sources of Communication

- 1. Spontaneous letters from constituents ***
- 2. Telephone calls from constituent ***
3. Congressional Research Service
4. Articles in major daily newspapers
5. Editorials in major daily newspapers
- 6. Visits from constituents ***
7. Articles in district daily newspapers

Source: Burson Marsteller



Highest Ranked Sources of Communication

8. Congressional Record
9. Editorials in district daily newspapers
10. Government publications
- 11. Orchestrated mail from constituents ***
12. Op-ed pieces in major daily newspapers
13. Op-ed pieces in local daily newspapers
14. Spontaneous letters from state officials
15. Spontaneous letters from interest groups

Source: Burson Marsteller



Simple Rules for Communications

1. Know What You Want to Request
2. Know Who to Ask (Target Specific Staff)
3. Don't Underestimate Value of Staff
4. Be Polite, Professional and Concise
5. Pick a Timely Method to Communicate
6. Know When to Ask
7. Follow Up on Request
8. Evaluate & Understand Odds of Success



Always Modify and Personalize Sample Letters Provided By NADO

“RPC has been involved in three major EDA public works projects to support private business expansion in recent years. EDA assisted with more than \$1 million to help finance more than \$2 million in water and wastewater improvements for Bodine Aluminum’s expansion in Troy, Missouri. As a result of this investment, 850 high paying jobs were created and Bodine Aluminum has invested more than \$200 million in new facilities. The project also spurred additional business startups and expansion, resulting in an additional 140 jobs and \$25 million in private investment.”

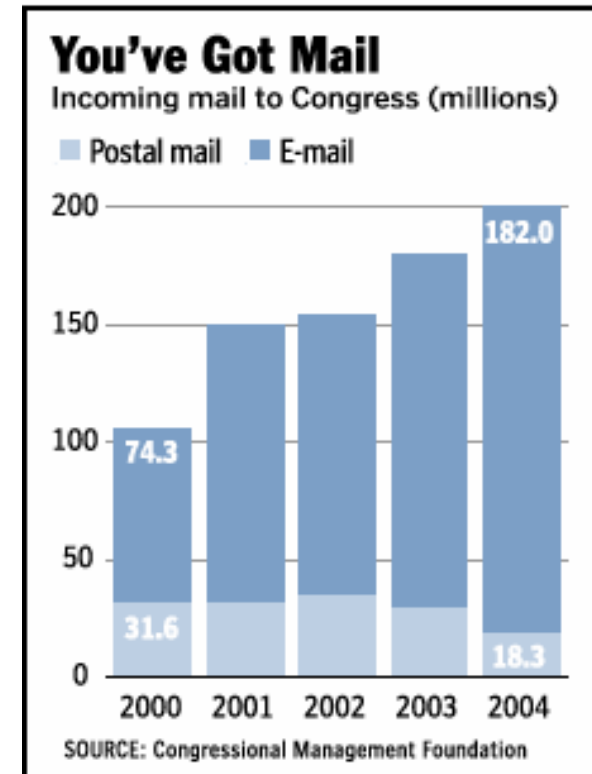


The Lazy Days of Email: Hill Inboxes Are Overflowing

► **US Senate:** 83 Million Emails
Received 2000 to 2004

► **US House:** 99 Million Emails
Received from 2000 to 2004

► **# of Personal Office Staff** for
House and Senate Members
Unchanged in 20 Years





Email Is Easy. But Is It Effective!

- Avoid messages to general mailbox of lawmaker
- Ask staff for permission to email directly
- Use spell check and proof read messages
- Keep it simple, yet reference bill number, specific task requested and contact info
- Only use when absolutely necessary;
Follow up with phone call
- Good to send short thank you note after meeting



Preparing for a Meeting

1. Define Purpose & Objective of Meeting
2. Research Legislator's Record
 - * Visit Web Site
 - * Know Lawmaker's Committee Assignments
 - * Bills Cosponsored and Introduced
 - * Committee and Floor Votes
 - * Prepare 1-Page Brief on Each Issue
3. Be Prepared to Deliver Message in Less Than Five Minutes and to Meet with Staff
4. Resources: Congress.org and Call NADO Staff



Legislative Web Resources

- NADO: nado.org
- US House: www.house.gov
- US Senate: www.senate.gov
- Legislative Info: Thomas.loc.gov
- OMB: www.whitehouse.gov/omb
- Issues and Contact Info: congress.org
- Political Contributions: www.fec.gov



The Art of Saying Thank You

- **Most common mistake** of lobbyists and grassroots advocates is forgetting to say thanks!
- **Reasons to thank your lawmakers, include:**
 - ◆ Vote taken on floor or in committee
 - ◆ Sponsor or cosponsor important legislation
 - ◆ Taking the time for a personal meeting
 - ◆ Signed “Dear Colleague” letter on a specific issue
 - ◆ Election/ reelection to Congress or leadership position
 - ◆ Support on local project or issues



Using the Media: Friend or Foe?

- Press Releases
- Press Conferences
- Letter to the Editor
- Opinion Pieces
- Editorial Board Meetings

See NADO Grassroots Guide for details



Tips on Media Messages

1. Keep new releases short – “sound bites”
2. Focus on one issue
3. Write concisely and check spelling
4. Release in a timely manner
5. Provide contact information
6. Include photographs when possible
7. Pick topics carefully
8. Provide date on release
9. Use active verbs
10. Send copy to NADO and members of Congress





NADO Congressional Awards

- NADO Members Nominated 110 House and Senate Members for 110th Congress
- Cost of Award: \$135
- Press Release Provided for NADO Member and for Congressional Office





National Group Honors Solomon The Post Star -- Glens Falls, NY

Glens Falls, NY — Rep. Gerald B. Solomon (R-NY) has been recognized by the National Association of Development Organizations for his strong support of rural local governments during the reauthorization of the nation's transportation programs. Congressman Solomon was presented with the award May 19 in Washington by Glens Falls native Matthew Chase, the association's executive director.

“While the 1991 highway law provided urban elected officials with a strong role in the planning process, their rural counterparts were not extended this same right,” Chase said. “Because of the efforts of Congressman Solomon and others, the new law will ensure that rural communities have a seat at the table and a way to raise awareness at the state level of local transportation needs and priorities.”

NADO Congressional Partnership Awards



Sections

Wednesday, May 12, 2004

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Boehlert receives award for support of development

By JOE PARMON-Telegram Staff Writer

FRANKFORT - Rep. Sherwood Boehlert (R-New Hartford) yesterday received the National Association of Development Organizations Congressional Partnership Award for his support of the group's legislative policies and cooperation with regional development organizations in the state.

The award was presented by Mike Reese, executive director of the Mohawk Valley Economic Development District, during a press conference held at the "Pumpkin Patch" site at the Route 5S South Business Park in the town of Frankfort.

"Congressman Boehlert has demonstrated significant support for federal policies and programs that help encourage economic development. His support of the MVEDD has resulted in millions of dollars in federal grant funding being invested in projects in the Mohawk Valley," said Reese.



AWARD PRESENTED - During a press conference yesterday at the Pumpkin Patch property at the Route 5S South Business Park, Rep. Sherwood Boehlert was handed the National Association of Development





Major Element #5:

**Understanding the
Different Roles and Types
of Congressional Staff**



3 Golden Rules for Hill Staff

- 1. Staff members are the “gatekeepers”**
and the “eyes and ears” for their boss
- 2. Treat All Staff Equally:** Today’s caseworker and legislative assistant is tomorrow’s chief of staff and legislative director
- 3. Always, always send a thank you note;**
Only 20% of visitors follow up with thank you!



Capitol Hill Staff

■ Personal Office

- ◆ AA or Chief of Staff
- ◆ Legislative Director
- ◆ Legislative Assistants
- ◆ Press Secretary
- ◆ Scheduler

■ Committee Staff

- ◆ Staff Director or Clerk
- ◆ Professional Staff
- ◆ Analyst
- ◆ Communications and Press

**NOTE: Every Capitol Hill office is set up differently,
with different power bases and pressure points!**



State and District Staff

- State or District Staff
- Project Directors
- Case Workers

KEY POINT:

To be truly effective
as a Grasstops
Advocate, you need
to know both the
staff in DC and staff
in the region.



Ideas to Build Relationships with Staff

■ Trips to tour district and projects

- ◆ Rep. Henry Brown with 20 T&I staff
- ◆ Utah COGs trip of new ATV Tour

■ Keep them informed and “looking smart”

■ Note to lawmaker recognizing staff work

■ Check New Rules on Gift Ban!



The Bottom Line...

You and your organization must take the time and invest the resources needed to be a successful grassroots leaders...

Your organizations future depends on it!



KEY POINT:
**Legislative Process is only
the midway point . . .**

**Don't forget about the
regulatory process!**

National Association of
Development Organizations



National Association of Development Organizations

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