

# Public Policy Advocacy

**Pennsylvania EPFP**

**March 31, 2017**

***Presented by Ron Cowell***

***The Education Policy and Leadership Center***

# Addressing Public Policy

- **Understand why public policy matters.**
- **Consider how you are affected.**
- **Determine how public policy can be used more effectively.**
- **Stretch your imagination!**
- **Understand how you can make a difference.**

# Public Policy

- **Public vs. Institutional vs. other (i.e. family).**
- **The enforceable “law” vs. practice or habit.**
- **Recognize pyramids of law and jurisdiction.**
- **Constitutions, statutes, regulations, other.**
- **Local (municipal, county, school district), state and federal.**

# Relevancy of Public Policy

- **Affects each of us in many ways.**
- **Shapes the environment in which we work.**
- **Shapes our professional lives.**
- **Can mandate, encourage, prohibit, or inhibit.**
- **Apply to “some” or “all” of a category.**
- **May create a “right” or entitlement”.**
- **Effect of constitutional prohibition on “special laws” (i.e. Pittsburgh, Harrisburg, etc.).**

# Related Considerations to Developing Public Policy

Other issues that may or may not be part of the “policy” or the law?

- *Who is to administer?*
  - *Who is to enforce?*
  - *Accountability and evaluation?*
- *Consequences for non-compliance?*

# State Policy Levers That May Be Used

- **Constitution**
- **Statutes**
- **Regulations**
- **Department Standards/BECS/Guidelines**
- **Appropriations**
- **Conditions attached (targeted, pilots, incentives, rewards)**
- **Appointing Authority**
- **Bully-Pulpit (speechmaking, convening)**
- **Elections and Political Campaigns**

# Relevant School District Policies

- **Hiring**
- **Curriculum**
- **Graduation requirements**
- **Extracurricular**
- **District-Community Partnerships**
- **Annual Budget**
- **Other ???**

# Why Public Advocacy?

- **The Importance of Public Policy.**
- **Federal, State & Local Education Policy.**
- **Your right to petition your elected officials.**
- **State & Federal legislators are generalists.**
- **Good policy depends upon those with experience, expertise, information, insight.**
- **Role of state associations and lobbyists.**
- **Role of the member and the constituent.**
- **If you don't, who will?**

# Many Opportunities for Public Advocacy

- Opportunities provided in the policymaking process.
- Requirements for public action by policymakers (Sunshine, etc.).
- Requirements for public notice.
- Requirements for several “readings” of legislation.
- State Regulatory review process.
- State & School District Budgets – process of several months.
- **Your obligation to “pay attention”.**

# Advocacy Framework

- **Know the Issues.**
- **Understand the Process.**
- **Know the Decision-Makers.**
- **Consider the Policy Levers.**
- **Be aware of the Political Environment.**
- **The “ASK”.**
- **What Works for Advocacy?**

# Know the Issues

(Because lawmakers may ask)

- Do the homework - become knowledgeable.
- Be clear and concise about what you ask for, and why.
- What is the problem?
- What do you propose?
- Who is affected?
- What is the cost?
- Who favors the legislation (potential allies)?
- Who opposes the legislation?
- Have an **“elevator speech”** ready!

# PA General Assembly

## (The Basics)

- **Institution with a long history steeped in traditions.**
- **House of Representatives (established 1681).**
  - *203 members*
  - *Presiding officer is the Speaker*
  - *About 60,000 constituents*
- **Senate (established 1790).**
  - *50 members*
  - *Presiding officer is Lt. Governor*
  - *About 250,000 constituents*

# **“Rules” for Operations of General Assembly**

- **Constitutional Rules**
  - One subject per bill.
  - Three readings per chamber.
  - 102 in House and 26 in Senate to pass legislation.
  - PA Supreme Court has usually been deferential to General Assembly.
- **Statutory Rules**
  - Sunshine notice, etc. These can be changed by writing new law.
- **Rules of the House and Senate**
  - Each chamber has its own Rules.
  - Are easily changed or suspended by the chamber.
  - Committees; committee members; public notice; voting.

# Basics of State Legislative Process

- **Any legislator can introduce any idea.**
- **Process is not easy.**
- **Committee process.**
- **Influence of the Committee Chair; Members.**
- **Committee Options – no action; hearings; long-delay; immediate action.**
- **Amendments in Committee.**
- **Fiscal note from Appropriations.**
- **Floor action (or not)**

# Enacting a Statutory Law

- **Bill must pass both House and Senate in exact same form (language, punctuation, everything!).**
- **Need to reconcile any differences.**
- **Conference committee.**
- **Send to Governor for approval.**
- **Sign, veto, or go without signature.**
  
- **Understand the many intervention opportunities available to you (timing is important).**

# Tracking a Bill

## ***See the Handout of Sample Bill:***

- **Bill number remains the same entire session.**
- **Printer's number changes with each re-print.**
- **Names of Sponsors.**
- **Summary of the content.**
- **Latest action.**

## ***See the Handout of History of a Bill:***

- **See all actions.**
- **Link to all amendments & text.**
- **Link to all votes.**

# Regulation-Making Process

- **State Board of Education or other agency.**
- **Regulatory Review Process.**

**Understand the intervention opportunities.**

**Transparent process with multiple opportunities for public/legislator comment.**

# Making State Law

## Statutory Process

<http://www.pacapitol.com/Resources/PDF/Making-Law-In-PA.pdf>

## Regulatory Process

<http://www.irrc.state.pa.us/contact/faqs.cfm>

# Recognize Key Events

- **Two-year cycle for Legislative Sessions.**
- **Governor election every four years.**
- **Leadership elections usually every two years.**
- **Governor's budget message (but planning began in departments previous summer/fall).**
- **Appropriations hearings (by invitation).**
- **June 30 budget deadline (or not!).**
- **Lots of related legislation usually part of the final "deal".**
- **Intervening elections in even-numbered years.**
- **Re-districting every 10 years.**

# Effective Advocacy

# Know Your Legislator(s)

- Who are your legislators (House, Senate)?
- Incumbent or new?
- Lives where?
- Background – family, work experience, community involvement?
- Who are their supporters? Opponents?
- Legislative interests? Committee assignments? Caucuses joined? Bills sponsored?
- Past voting record?
- Who are the staff?

**You need to start where they are, not where you wish they would be.**

# Influencing Your Legislator(s)

- **Goal is to build a trusting relationship between you and policymaker**
- **Focus first on your own legislators**
- **Establish your credibility – don't ever lie, mislead**
- **Legislative offices - Get to know the staff**
- **Build a team of constituents**
- **Visits to your school, program (your turf)**
- **Allies, Coalitions and Networks**
- **Media opportunities (with children)**
- **Petitions? Letters? Calls? E-mails?**

# Effective Public Advocacy

## *In case of school board members:*

- These are critical decision-makers in PA because of 500 districts and local control
- **Same Goal: Trusting relationship – establish credibility**
- **Build a team of constituents (Booster club? Former students? Employers/businesses?)**
- **Present to School Board meeting**
- **Visits to your school, program (your turf)**
- **Discuss how policy decisions affect you, your children, schools and community.**
- **Allies, Coalitions and Networks**
- **Media opportunities (with children)**
- **Petitions? Letters? Calls? E-mails?**

# Allies and Coalitions

- **Who are other stakeholders?**
- **What are their interests?**
- **Are there competing interests?**
- **What are their advocacy capacities?**
- **Coalitions are challenging.**
  - **What are the costs?**
  - **Do you have to compromise goals?**
  - **How much time will be required?**
  - **Will your focus be diverted?**

# Office Visits

- **Ideally.....make an appointment**
- **On time – be polite – busy people**
- **Homework – consider what will resonate with this lawmaker?**
- **Discuss how policy decisions affect you, your children, schools and community**
- **Tell a story**
- **The “ask”**
- **Stay on message**
- **Don’t argue or leave negative impression**
- **Business card plus “a leave behind” with key points**

# The “Ask”

Who should do What?

Be Specific

Measurable

To Hold Accountable

# The “Why”

The Problem to be Addressed

An Effective Solution

The Impact of

# The Elevator Speech

# Building Effective Relationships

- **Not a one-time activity!**
- **Engage lawmaker in other ways such as service on committees, boards**
- **Serve on an advisory committee**
- **Testify at hearings**
- **Be a campaign volunteer**
- **Become a reliable source of information**
- **Become the “turn to” person on your issues**
- **Hold policymaker accountable**
- **Say “Thanks”**

# Communications Tools

- **Editorial Boards**
- **Education Writers**
- **Letter-to-the Editor**
- **Op-Ed Columns**
- **TV and Talk Shows (Local Cable?)**
- **Partners' Networks**
- **Building Alliances**
- **Web Site as an advocacy tool**
- **Blogs**
- **Facebook, Twitter & other Social Media**
- **E-lists**
- **Other??**

# Policy Information Tools

- Pennsylvania Manual
- Pennsylvania Bulletin [www.pabulletin.com](http://www.pabulletin.com)
- House/Senate Journal
- Legislative websites
- History of Bills
- PDE and SBE websites
- Agency Websites/newsletters/e-alerts
- State & National Associations/Advocacy Orgs
- EPLC – [www.eplc.org](http://www.eplc.org) and links to others
- Get on EPLC mailing lists

# Contact Information

**The Education Policy and Leadership Center  
800 North Third Street, Suite 505  
Harrisburg, PA 17102**

**[www.eplc.org](http://www.eplc.org)**

**@eplc\_education**

**717-260-9900**

**Ron Cowell**

**[cowell@eplc.org](mailto:cowell@eplc.org)**

**@RonaldCowellPA**

**412-298-4796**