Effective Grass Roots Advocacy

NORTH DAKOTA HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
ANNUAL CONVENTION
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BY
JOHN W. FLINK, CONSULTANT, NDHA
AND
JACK MCDONALD, SENIOR PARTNER,
WHEELER WOLF LAW FIRM
Agenda

- Advocacy 101
- Advocacy on Federal Issues
- Advocacy in the North Dakota Legislature
Advocacy 101
Why Advocacy is Important

- Public policy decisions in Bismarck and Washington directly affect our ability to serve our communities
  - Federal and state government the largest payer for health services in North Dakota

- Advocacy programs empower and educate major constituencies

- Everybody’s doing it

- The bad guys are working overtime!
The Goals of Advocacy

- Inform and educate
  - What’s going on in health care in ND – trends, environmental assessment
  - Impact of proposed legislation, current law

- Persuade
  - Win support for our agenda

- This is all about relationships!!!
  - Be a trusted source of reliable, accurate information
  - Regular communication – not just when we need something
Federal tax law allows 501(c)(3) organizations to engage – within certain limits – in lobbying about issues with any legislator or legislative staff member, where the principal purpose is to influence legislation.

501(c)(3) organizations prohibited from participating or intervening in any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to candidates for public office.
The Three Elements of Advocacy

Grass Roots/Tops

PAC ↔ Direct Lobbying
Direct Lobbying

- **Lobbyists:**
  - Facilitate communication between members of Congress, staff and constituents
  - Source of policy information for congressional staff
  - Raise buckets of campaign money

- **The good old days are gone**
  - No more “Gucci alley”
  - Reforms have limited lobbyists ability to throw money around
The Three Elements of Advocacy

- Grass Roots/Tops
- PAC
- Direct Lobbying
Grass Roots & Grass Tops

• Grass roots advocacy
  ○ Organized campaigns to communicate key messages to congressional delegation and state officials
    ▸ Emphasis on quantity of messages – many unified voices strengthens power
    ▸ Build community wide support – letters to the editor, op-eds
    ▸ Who: Management team, staff, trustees, physicians
    ▸ How: Meetings, e-mails, phone calls, social media

• Grass tops advocacy
  ○ Using key contacts to communicate messages directly to the member of Congress, state official or key staff – emphasis on quality of messages
    ▸ Who: NDHA members who have a special relationship with a member of Congress
Why Grass Roots are Flourishing

- News ways to communicate make it easier to reach voters, constituents directly
  - E-newsletters
  - E-mail fund-raising
  - Telephone “town halls”
  - Social media

- More issues, more ways to keep informed

- “Recount” elections show 1 vote matters
## Why Your Voice Matters

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Lobbyists</th>
<th>Hospitals</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide health care</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vote in your district</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Exercise power in numbers</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Be a leader in your community</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Help health care providers be effective advocates</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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The Three Elements of Advocacy

- Grass Roots/Tops
- PAC
- Direct Lobbying
NDHA Political Action Committee

- PACs pool many small contributions – build a large pool to support key officials and candidates
  - Strengthens NDHA voice in election campaigns
  - Helps us support candidates who are good for health care

- Who do PACs support?
  - Legislators and other officials in key positions for health care
  - Our champions
  - Members of the hospital community running for office

- Why bother?
  - Helping candidates strengthens relationships
  - It may be unpleasant, but it’s the only system we’ve got
    - “Money is the mother’s milk of politics” – Tip O’Neill
    - “Early money buys access; late money buys good government” – Sen. Russell Long
NDHA’s Current PAC Activities

- Affiliated with AHA PAC to support federal candidates
  - 2012 Target: $9,500
  - 2012 Status: $8,500

- NDHA Board authorized NDHA State PAC
  - Start date: January 1, 2013
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ADVOCACY IN WASHINGTON
The Congressional Year...

- **Schedule**
  - Convenes in January
  - House: two weeks on and one week off
  - Senate: recess at President’s Day, Easter, Memorial Day, July 4, August, Columbus Day

- **Key dates**
  - Start of fiscal year (October 1)
  - December 31 deadlines – e.g. taxes, doc fix, OPPS
  - President’s budget (Feb)
  - Congressional budget resolution (April)
  - Appropriations process (June – September 30)
## Key Committees

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<th>Committee</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
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<td><strong>Senate</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Finance (Conrad)</td>
<td>• Medicare</td>
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<td>• Medicaid</td>
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<td>• Tax</td>
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<td>Appropriations (Hoeven)</td>
<td>• HHS funds</td>
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<td>• IHS funds</td>
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<td><strong>House of Representatives</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ways &amp; Means (Berg)</td>
<td>• Medicare Part A</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Tax</td>
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<tr>
<td>Appropriations</td>
<td>• HHS funds</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• IHS funds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy &amp; Commerce</td>
<td>• Medicare Part B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Medicaid</td>
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A Day in the Life of a Member of Congress...

- Long hours
- Speeches
- Caucuses
- Meetings with constituents, lobbyists, others on disparate issues
- Multiple hearings in multiple committees
- Floor debate and votes
- Briefings on upcoming hearings and legislation
- Campaign fund-raisers, fund-raising phone calls
- Party obligations
When You Meet With a Member and/or Staff...

- **Limited time – often just a “meet and greet”**
  - The real discussion is with staff

- **Expert on only one or two issues**
  - Rely heavily on staff

- **With a hectic schedule, it’s easy for the member and staff to be distracted or lose focus**
The Message is Key

- General theme: public policies have great impact on our ability to meet our communities’ health care needs

- **In your message:**
  - Know your audience – what the member cares about
  - State policy impact on constituents
  - Be succinct
  - Use personal stories, local data
  - Show any relative cost savings

- **Stay on Message!!**
Don’t Ignore Social Media

- Conversations about what is happening in your community are happening online and social media gives you an opportunity to participate in the dialogue

- More than 80 percent of members of Congress have social media accounts – i.e. Facebook, Twitter, etc
  - Sen. Conrad on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, flickr
  - Sen. Hoeven on Twitter
  - Rep. Berg on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube
Cultivate Trustees

- Trustees are often the most effective advocates for your hospital
  - Trustees have political clout and special relationships with members of Congress

- “Trustees need to recognize that grass roots advocacy is a board responsibility” – Jamie Orlikoff
  - Because so much hospital revenue comes from government payers, influencing payment policies is part of a board’s fiduciary responsibility
Best Ways to Communicate with Members

- Personal meeting with the member in North Dakota – preferably in your facility
- E-mail with member and staff
- Telephone visit with member and staff
- Personal office visit in Washington
- Social media?
- DO NOT send letters through the mail – tight security delays delivery
Tools & Resources

- NDHA Web site
- AHA Web site
  - www.aha.org
  - “We Care...We Vote”
- Congress
  - Connect to ND delegation
  - Floor, committee schedules
  - Bill information (Library of Congress)
  - Vote tallies
NDHA’s Role

- Alert members to upcoming issues
- Analyze impacts of proposed legislation
- Coordinate grass roots/tops tactics
- Develop the message for the delegation
- Stay united – prevent divide and conquer
  - “Remember, we’re all in this together” – Red Green
  - “Hang together or hang separately”
“I have told paid lobbyists for years that any lobbyist worth his salt will concentrate on getting my constituents to tell me what they think...not what he thinks. He better spend his time getting them to write me because that’s what I listen to.”

- Republican senator
The End of the Year “Fiscal Cliff”

- 27 percent Medicare physician cut
- Other Medicare extenders expire
- Bush tax cuts expire
- Payroll tax cut expires
- Emergency unemployment benefits expire
- Other tax provisions expire (AMT, estate tax)
- Sequestration scheduled to kick in
- Debt ceiling extension (February – March)
What Happens in DC Affects North Dakota

**Short-term issues**
- Offsets for preventing a 27 percent Medicare physician payment cut – E/M cuts, coding offsets
- Delay sequestration?

**Long-term budget issues**
- If a “grand budget deal” – Medicare and Medicaid in play
- Medicare options
  - Raise eligibility age
  - High income pay more of their medical costs
  - Premium support
  - Rural – CAH payment and policy changes
  - PPS hospital, home health, SNF, other provider payment cuts – including frontier states wage index
- Medicaid issues
  - Block grants
  - Other proposals to shift Medicaid costs from federal to state governments
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ADVOCACY IN THE NORTH DAKOTA LEGISLATURE