

Health Policy 201– Advocacy tools

Ellen Andrews, PhD
CT Health Policy Project
Fall 2011

Agitators are a set of interfering, meddling people, who come down to some perfectly contented class of the community and sow seeds of discontent amongst them. That is the reason why agitators are so absolutely necessary. Without them, in our incomplete state, there would be no advance toward civilization.

-- Oscar Wilde

legislative advocacy

- This is often what people first think of as “advocacy” or lobbying
- Legislative process is far more open and responsive to the public than other branches
- Public input is a formal part of the process



legislative advocacy

- **Patience** – rare that a bill passes in its first year
- **Perspective** – understand that your issues have to get in the queue
- **Understand and respect the system** – experience has value, seek it out
- **Create relationships** – most important of all
- **Offer solutions** – don't just complain
- **Recruit a champion, then TRUST them**

how a bill becomes a law

- Sponsors
- Committees
- Chairs, screening, JF days
- Hearings, Meetings, Changes
- Referrals
- Calendars, both houses, screening
- Amendments, Christmas trees and vehicles
- Governor signs (or not)

how a bill really becomes a law

- Choosing a champion/shepherd
- Backrooms, good intelligence/gossip
- Fiscal notes, is it in the budget?
- Agency support/resistance
- Attentiveness -- 1000s of ways to kill a bill, millions of ways for a bill to just putter out
- Politics, old scores and other baggage

legislators – who are they?

- Part time
- Work for their voters
- Not wonks
- They need your input
- Diverse
- Do not make assumptions about their views – based on demographics or party, ask them
- Rely on staff heavily
- The importance of leadership



the importance of legislative staff

- Usually longer tenure than most legislators
- They run the process – cross them and you will pay
- Overworked, many are open to your help/input
- Partisan vs. non-partisan
- OFA, OLR, LCO, committee staff, caucus staff, aides
- Can be incredibly effective champions
- Often the only route to backrooms

I congratulated a DSS official on her promotion and asked "Isn't it great being up there where the buck stops?" Her answer: "I'm not sure where the buck stops. I don't really think that it's here. But I have seen it roll over us at times."

CT Health Policy Project Advocacy Toolbox

administrative advocacy

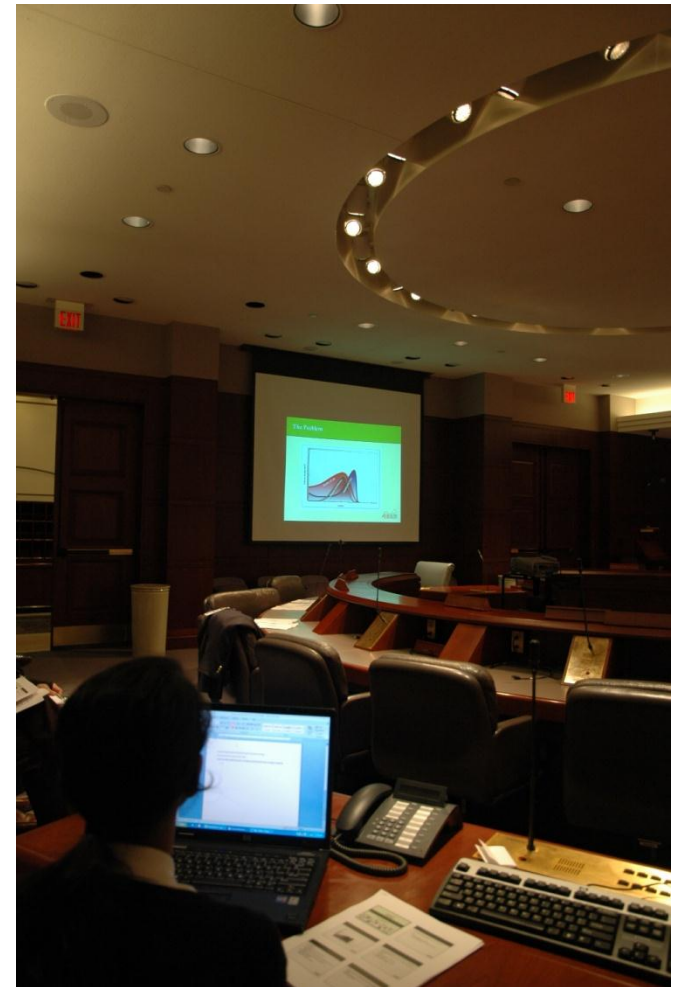
- Very powerful
- Include them early – both top and bottom of food chain
- Create relationships of trust -- can be champions and important sources of info
- They implement the laws – they are the devil in the details
- They are not elected, they don't answer to you or to voters
- Appointed vs. civil service
- Agency turf issues
- Current climate – staff reductions, great anxiety, overworked

freedom of information

- State and federal laws
- Powerful tool
- Agencies usually cooperative
- Right to obtain records and attend meetings, public notices, with reasonable exceptions
- Rights to inspection during business hours
- Can be hard to get access to data
- Check yourself first, it can be a burden on the agency

regulations

- Statutes give guidance, regulations give detail
- How to find them, if they exist
- Process – Reg.s Review Committee
- Under-appreciated by advocates, legislators
- Other planning documents



other tools

- Media
- Coalitions
- Lobbyists
- Judicial advocacy
- Electoral advocacy

common advocate mistakes

- Learn the system first
- They don't have to "get religion", they just have to vote yes (or no)
- Don't leave without closing the deal
- Always follow through
- Don't take anything personally
- Be patient
- Be flexible

tips no advocate should forget

- Always be polite
- Say thank you, to everyone who helps
- Get your story straight
- NEVER make up an answer
- Trust your champion
- Patience
- Perspective

Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not.

-- Dr. Seuss



For help – CT Health Policy Project
Advocacy Toolbox

www.cthealthpolicy.org/toolbox