Advocacy: A Tool For Change

NPA Annual Meeting
March 27, 2011
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Workshop Overview

- Introduction
- Panelist Insight
- Open questions
- Advocacy in action
Issues at hand

- Immigration policies
- Funding for scientific research
- Economy
- Scientific workforce
- Conflict of interest
- Global challenges
- Health

STEM education
Advocacy

• Advocacy: Active support of a cause or proposal, action of advocating for or supporting something

• A tool for change, and provides a chance to inform that change

• Scientific research: major vehicle for economic growth and improved health

• Scientists: well-situated to inform, can provide desired input
Advocacy or Lobbying?

**Advocacy**
- Active support of a cause
- Can include:
  - Providing nonpartisan analysis or research on an issue
  - Sending out updates to the members of your organization on current or upcoming legislation without a “call to action”
  - Lobbying

**Lobbying**
- Intention to influence legislative decisions, often by stating a position on specific legislation (for an individual or a group)
- “Call to action” to members of an organization
- Is a form of advocacy
Advocacy…

• Can include lobbying
  • Support for legislation that can improve postdoc opportunities and training
  • Support for a particular policy change or improvement

• Requires motivation: To raise your voice, push for a better future, because you’re passionate, etc.

• Can also include media campaigns, research or polls
Wait...don’t non-profits lobby?

• Non-profits can lobby, but with limits
  • Insubstantial part test - cannot be a substantial part of the overall activity
  • Expenditure test – less than 20% of its annual expenditures

• Organization ultimately decides which to follow and shores it up with legal advice
Advocating: what to think about

• What is the issue?
  • Policy blogs, professional societies, research advocacy organizations, general news and scientific publications

• Who cares or might be affected?
  • Stakeholders (colleagues, institutions, communities), legislators, agencies
Advocating-what to think about Cont.

- Who is the decision-maker?
  - Legislative, Executive, Institutional administration

- What is the current “environment”?
  - Presidential support of investments in science and technology, 4% increase in NRSA stipends in proposed budget
  - Debt and spending concerns
Who makes the decision?

Executive
- e.g. Requirement of mentoring plans in grant applications

Judicial

Legislative
- e.g. Stipend levels
Legislative Process

The Money

• The Budget!
  • February - President’s budget submitted to Congress
  • March through April - Congressional Budget Resolution (joint), Appropriations Subcommittee hearings
  • May through September – Appropriations Subcommittees approve funding bills; House and Senate vote and pass a budget
Keep in mind

• Process is not always smooth – See right now
  • Adaptability
  • Realism

• Allies and messages of support
  • “The future is in your hands, and much of the present.” – Dr. Francis Collins, Director of the National Institutes of Health

• Institutional leadership – The J. David Gladstone Institutes
Tools

• Information:
  • Seek it out (blogs, websites, Town Hall meetings, involvement with legislators, etc.)
  • Get it delivered (mailing lists)

• Support: Others with common interests

• Planning: Considerations, possible results, rebuttals, points of compromise, dealbreakers

• Data: Everybody likes it
Communicating the Message

- Choose **one** message
- Clarity and brevity
  - State your purpose (legislation, policy, etc.)
  - State your position on the issue
  - Support your position (tasty data)
  - State your request (the “ask”)
- Follow-up
  - Contact information and any promised materials
  - Notification to partnering organizations
Details

• If in person:
  • Be prompt and polite
  • Respect the time
  • Get information from staff and leave information for them

• If in writing:
  • Good grammar and appropriate style

• First contact does not guarantee success

• Persistence without pestilence
Links you might find useful

- NPA: [www.nationalpostdoc.org](http://www.nationalpostdoc.org)
- Senate: [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov)
- Other government websites:
  - [www.cbo.gov](http://www.cbo.gov)
  - [thomas.gov](http://thomas.gov)
  - [www.ncsl.org](http://www.ncsl.org)
  - [www.csg.org](http://www.csg.org)
- Additional resources:
  - [www.aaas.org](http://www.aaas.org)
  - [www.faseb.org](http://www.faseb.org)
  - [www.aau.edu](http://www.aau.edu)
  - [www.nationalacademies.org/](http://www.nationalacademies.org/)
  - [www.aacr.org](http://www.aacr.org)
  - [www.sfn.org](http://www.sfn.org)
  - [http://scienceblogs.com/](http://scienceblogs.com/)
  - [http://news.sciencemag.org/scienceinsider/](http://news.sciencemag.org/scienceinsider/)
  - [http://www.sefora.org/](http://www.sefora.org/)
And now, the panelists!

- **Pamela Bradley**, Associate Director for Science Policy, AACR Office of Science Policy & Government Affairs
- **Avenel Joseph**, Legislative Assistant, U.S. House of Representatives
- **Jennifer Zeitzer**, Director of Legislative Relations Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB)