April 29-May 2
Sheraton National
Washington, DC

Community-Campus Partnerships for Health
A POLICY AGENDA FOR HEALTH IN THE 21ST CENTURY

TRACK 9

Advocating for Community-Campus Partnerships for Health

written by

Charles G. Huntington, Connecticut Area Health Education Center Program, Farmington, CT

Prepared for Discussion at Community-Campus Partnerships for Health's 4th Annual Conference
April 29th ~ May 2, 2000 Washington, DC

Please do not cite or reproduce without permission from:
Community-Campus Partnerships for Health
3333 California Street, Suite 410
San Francisco, CA 94118
PH: 415-476-7081 FAX: 415-476-4113 E-MAIL: ccph@itsa.ucsf.edu
http://futurehealth.ucsf.edu/ccph.html

This preparation of this paper was made possible, in part, by support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the Corporation for National Service

Please do not cite or reproduce without permission from Community-Campus Partnerships for Health

PREFACE

From Community-Campus Partnerships to Capitol Hill: A Policy Agenda for Health in the 21st Century April 29-May 2, 2000 ~ Washington, DC

Creating healthier communities and overcoming complex societal problems require collaborative solutions that bring communities and institutions together as equal partners and build upon the assets, strengths and capacities of each. Community-campus partnerships involve communities and higher educational institutions as partners, and may address such areas as health professions education (i.e. service-learning), health care delivery, research, community service, community-wide health improvement, and community/economic development. Founded in 1996, Community-Campus Partnerships for Health is a non-profit organization that fosters community-campus partnerships as a strategy for improving health professions education, civic responsibility and the overall health of communities. In just four years, we have grown to a network of over 700 communities and campuses that are collaborating to achieve these goals.

Community-Campus Partnerships for Health's 4th annual conference was designed to broaden and deepen participants' understanding of the policies, processes and structures that affect community-campus partnerships, civic responsibility, and the overall health of communities. The conference also aimed to enhance participants' ability to advance these policies, processes and structures.

This paper – one of nine commissioned for discussion at the conference – played an integral role in the conference design and outcomes and would not have been possible without the generous support of the Corporation for National Service and the WK Kellogg Foundation. On the conference registration form, participants chose a track that interested them the most in terms of contributing to the development of recommendations and possibly continuing to work on them after the conference. Participants were then sent a copy of the commissioned paper corresponding to their chosen track, to review prior to the conference. At the conference, participants were assigned to a policy action team (PAT). Led by the authors of that track's commissioned paper, each PAT met twice during the conference to formulate key findings and recommendations. These key findings and recommendations were presented at the conference's closing session and are reflected in the conference proceedings (a separate publication). These will be considered by CCPH's board of directors as part of its strategic planning and policy development process, and are expected to shape CCPH policies and programs in the coming years.

The complete set of nine commissioned papers is available on CCPH's website at http://futurehealth.ucsf.edu/ccph.html

1. Integrating student learning objectives with community service objectives through service-learning in health professions schools curricula – Kate Cauley
2. Working with our communities: moving from service to scholarship in the health professions – Cheryl Maurana, Marie Wolff, Barbra J. Beck and Deborah E. Simpson
3. Promoting collaborations that improve health – Roz Lasker
4. Public policies to promote community-based and interdisciplinary health professions education – Janet Coffman and Tim Henderson
5. Building communities: stronger communities and stronger universities – Loomis Mayfield
6. Community-based participatory research: engaging communities as partners in health research – Barbara Israel, Amy J. Schulz, Edith A. Parker, and Adam B. Becker
7. Racial and ethnic disparities in health status: framing an agenda for public health and community mobilization – Gerard Fergerson
8. Social change through student leadership and activism – David Grande and Sindhu Srinivas
9. Advocating for community-campus partnerships for health – Charles G. Huntington

Abstract

This paper provides an introduction to advocating for community-campus partnerships for health (CCPH). It provides a rationale for legislative advocacy and briefly describes some key elements of the legislative process. A range of standard advocacy methods are discussed, including message development, position papers, letter writing, legislative visits, dealing with the media, health advisory committees, fund raising, and association legislative strategy. Several recommendations for legislative advocacy activities are presented for consideration by CCPH and its network. Additional resources are suggested.

INTRODUCTION

This paper provides you with an introduction to advocating for community-campus partnerships for health (CCPH). It provides you with a range of options and lets you to determine the extent of your involvement. Your only risk in having received this material is in failing to use it. In doing so you cede the political process to others, many of whom surely have interests different from your own. The material in this handbook is based on two over riding concepts:

- *Strategic thinking* - The ability of the CCPH to achieve its goals, like it or not, is tied to having supportive legislation. Influencing legislation that is positive to CCPH is a strategy that must be employed if we are to achieve our goals related to service learning and improved access to health care.
- *Building relationships* - Successfully implementing a legislative strategy is predicated on building and maintaining productive relationships with local, state and federal legislators. There is no substitute.

WHY DO THIS?

Legislative advocacy is important because every form of government, from town boards to the U.S. Congress, takes actions that either directly or indirectly affect the health of your community. Three concurrent trends make the involvement of health professionals, community health leaders, and grassroots advocates in legislative advocacy more important than ever.

- Federal spending for domestic programs has not kept pace with the growth in the economy or the need for health related programs. As a result, we are being asked to do more with less.
- Domestic programs of all kinds have fallen into disfavor. Both democratic and republican legislators view the role of government in our society from a more conservative perspective. Domestic programs such as community-based health professions training programs are a tough sell.
- Legislative changes have put us in the position of competing with other programs for the same dollars. Advocates for other programs are not shy about suggesting that health professions' training dollars would be better spent elsewhere.

The net effect of these three trends is that we are experiencing more competition for fewer dollars and must make our case to a Congress that is less willing to hear any of it. Members of Congress and members of state legislatures support the programs they feel are of the greatest value to their constituents, and they cannot know the value of community-campus partnerships relative to other programs unless members of the CCPH network tell them. No one else is going to tell the CCPH story for you, but it is an absolute certainty that other competing programs will be making a compelling case as to why their programs should be funded instead.

Changing markets. As a health professional, community health leader, or grassroots advocate you are well aware of the changes in health care. Not only is there large-scale change, but the pace of change is increasing. More and more people are without health insurance, and fewer and fewer providers are available to serve the needs of vulnerable populations. Amidst all the activity, how can your voice be heard by those who are responsible for establishing our nation's health policies? Moreover, health care has become increasingly competitive. Whereas doctors and hospitals used to make most of the decisions affecting health care delivery, now insurance executives and health plan administrators do.

Change is never easy, and change is inevitable. Inevitably, change creates winners and losers. Dollars for federal and state programs are perennially tight, and competition for those dollars is ever more fierce. Frequently lost in the shuffle are the most vulnerable populations who are least able to advocate for their own needs. Not surprisingly, those interests who feel most threatened by changes in the health care system are mobilizing aggressively to protect their interests.

Whether or not health care can be distributed appropriately within a competitive market and with what burden of regulation remains a subject of much good-faith debate. But, it is the nature of competitive markets that some participants will do better and some will fare less well. Despite the swelling ranks

Please do not cite or reproduce without permission from Community-Campus Partnerships for Health

of those doing less well, at least as measured by the loss of health insurance, the advocates of a competitive health care market have won the day.

Political reality. While legislators frequently seek to pass laws that are "right," being right does not guarantee success in the legislative process. In any case, "rightness" is in the eye of the beholder. At least as often as by rightness, the legislative process is driven by the political realities facing legislators. The art of successful advocacy often boils down to figuring out what those realities are and then marshaling the resources necessary to make the process work in your favor.

Few people engage in the political process without feeling that their idealism has been violated. But, as a nation, we have been well served by our political processes, and few of us would voluntarily agree to be governed under a different system. We are a nation of competing interests, and, somehow, through all the messiness, those interests get balanced out. As a general matter, those who commit themselves to the process are the ones whose interests are brought to bear.

You may think that being a dedicated CCPH professional and serving diligently your community is enough. Such things should be recognized for their intrinsic value. You are right, they should be, but that well-deserved recognition simply does not occur automatically. Doing the right thing, as important as that is, doesn't mean that your legislator will know what you do or that it is right. You have to tell him or her. And, you can be a very effective communicator of your message.

As a CCPH advocate you are right, but being right does not guarantee that the legislative process will always treat your interests well. If you are convinced of the virtue of what you do everyday, then it is incumbent on you to do whatever it takes to persuade your legislators of the merits of your case. Others with entirely different ideas about how taxpayer dollars ought to be spent think that they are right too, and they are applying every tool in their arsenal to ensure that their version of right prevails.

You're the health care expert. On the other hand, legislators are rarely health care professionals. Legislators are not usually in a position to understand health and health care needs at the community level. As a CCPH professional you are. Legislators need your advice. Legislators take advice from those who will give it. If you don't give it; they won't get it, or they will get it from someone else. Getting involved in the legislative process is about delivering a message. Getting involved means learning how to make your message the most compelling message your legislator hears.

Self-determination. As a CCPH advocate actively involved in the legislative process you are helping to ensure that elected officials make the right decisions about health and health care. This is an important responsibility that you are undertaking, not dissimilar from the one you undertook when you entered the service learning world. As a CCPH professional, you assumed responsibility for improving the health and wellbeing of your community. In becoming politically active, you are taking an additional step in executing that same responsibility. Because the decisions that Congress and state legislatures make have such a powerful effect on health care delivery, the latter (political activity) is really just a direct extension of the former (your role as an advocate for service learning). The political activities that you are undertaking will ensure that you and your colleagues can continue to meet the needs of your community. You are doing this to maximize your contribution to the health and wellbeing of your community.

The role of professional lobbyists. Since many state and national professional organizations employ professional lobbyists to represent their interests before Congress and state legislatures, you may wonder why it is important for you to get involved directly in politics. The fact is that the nature of lobbying has changed. Sunshine laws, which have curtailed closed-door meetings between legislators and lobbyists, and aggressive press reporters make the back room deals of the past much more difficult to pull off. Moreover, advances in the use of electronic communications and the increased use of polling have made it much easier to organize large "grassroots" efforts around

specific issues. While professional lobbyists continue to play a vital role in representing various interests, legislators have always been, and will continue to be, most persuaded by their constituents -- the people who have the power to put them in office and keep them there. Legislators want to know what the voters think.

HOW A BILL BECOMES LAW

You do not need to have a detailed knowledge of legislative process in order to be successful in your legislative advocacy efforts. However, a general familiarity with the steps by which a bill becomes a law will help you understand the rationale and timing of the advocacy process. Below are the key points that you need to understand about the process.

Only a handful of bills are ever enacted into law. Each bill must go through a complex process that contains many decision points. The failure to clear any one of these decision points means the bill is dead for that legislative session. Approximately 10,000 bills are introduced into every two-year session of Congress, but only a few of hundred become law.

Advocacy efforts are timed to coincide with key legislative decision points. Although the overall process can be quite complex, each bill is subjected to a few key decision points such as subcommittee and committee consideration, legislative hearings, and conference committee consideration. Advocacy efforts are targeted toward influencing the right decision at these key decision points.

Each bill is assigned to a committee with specific jurisdiction. CCPH-related legislation is considered initially by the Congressional committees that have specific jurisdiction over health-related matters. If a bill fails to be reported out of a committee, it is dead. But if a bill is reported favorably by a committee, it has a good chance of becoming law.

Legislative advocacy efforts are targeted on the members of the key health committees. Because committee consideration of a bill is so crucial to its ultimate success, advocacy efforts are focused on the members of the key health committees. Lists of committee members are readily available through

Please do not cite or reproduce without permission from Community-Campus Partnerships for Health

the Congressional web site and that of each state legislative body. If this relatively small group of legislators can be convinced to support a bill, its chances of passage are markedly improved.

A long-term perspective is essential. Legislative dockets are very crowded, and competition for the attention of legislators is keen. Not infrequently, it takes two or more legislative sessions for a bill to enter to consciousness of the legislators. Patience, persistence, and realistic expectations about the number of years that it takes to get a bill passed are essential assets in legislative advocacy.

UNDERSTANDING THE NEEDS OF LEGISLATORS

A key element in positioning yourself to influence the legislative process is understanding the needs of the legislator and doing whatever you can to meet those needs. It's really very simple; you try to meet their needs, and later, when the time is right, they will try to meet yours.

Candidates first. The first and most important thing that you must understand is that legislators are always candidates. Except perhaps for U.S. Senators, who have six-year terms, elected officials are almost always running for office. An essential screen through which a legislator will put every issue before deciding on his or her position is the impact that position will have on the chances for re-election.

What's in a name? Candidates for elected office need first-and-foremost to achieve solid name recognition in their districts. Promoting name recognition involves everything from yard placards and bumper stickers to slick expensive infomercials. Because of the high cost of advertising, candidates seek as many opportunities as possible to generate free publicity through the news media (earned media).

Building the platform. Beyond name recognition, candidates need to distinguish themselves through their individual campaign messages, which collectively make up a platform. Each candidate seeks to be identified with a few clear, broad campaign themes, or "planks," that resonate with voters. Most people don't care very much about politics, so candidates attempt to

communicate in a way that "connects" with voters regarding things they do care about. Most often this means connecting at an emotional level. Politicians know that people will vote for someone they believe cares about the same things that they care about. But, how does a politician know what the voters care about? Not infrequently they use poll results, but more often they rely on their own constituents who take the time to share their concerns. Because you know that your candidate needs to develop messages that resonate with constituents, you can communicate your issues in a way that literally gives the politician the message he or she needs.

Staying alive and avoiding risk. No matter what initially motivates a candidate to run for political office, it will all be for naught unless the candidate is elected. Staying in office means that a legislator must know the impact on the electorate of every decision that he or she makes. In fact, it is probably not too much of an exaggeration to say that impact on the electorate is the major factor driving most of the decisions that a legislator makes.

Legislators are risk-averse. Most are loath to take a stand that can be used against them in an election, and they are reluctant to even consider taking a stand until they are able to assess with certainty the impact on voters of any particular bill. Assessing the impact on voters is not simply a matter of counting votes. It is more apt to mean avoiding the ire of active and vocal constituencies who are able to stir up voter sympathies.

These two political imperatives, to get elected and to avoid risk, present you with tremendous opportunities. You are a constituent and a member of the community. You have your ear close to the ground. You know and can accurately communicate the diverse views within the health community. You provide the local perspective. You can prevent your legislator from stepping on a political land mine. Having said this, all legislators will occasionally take an unpopular but principled stand. Knowing that there are opinion leaders in the community will back them up is very important.

MESSAGE MAKING

As a CCPH advocate, you have a message to deliver, and you have a very limited opportunity to get it across. First, you need to get your audience's attention and then you need to communicate it in a clear and concise manner. This is not necessarily difficult to do, but it requires a little forethought and planning on your part. The right message delivered at the right time and through the right channel makes for effective communication. Failing to coordinate the message and its delivery with the audience wastes time and effort. You will need to invest a little of both in order to be recognized and heard. Your message must be important enough to be heard over the barrage of information competing for the legislator's attention. And, your message must vie with those taking competing views, who may have greater resources with which to craft and deliver their own perspectives.

The language of politics is designed to reach people on an emotional level. Even though politicians may fully appreciate the intellectual merits of your argument, what you are trying to communicate must connect at the gut level. In order to communicate effectively, you don't need to change what you believe or value, you just need to be sensitive to your audience and how you express your message.

Know your audience. Before you can be persuasive, you must know to whom you are talking. Do a little background research. Candidate biographies are available from legislative and campaign offices. If your association employs a lobbyist, he or she can provide you with extensive information on state and federal legislators. Interspersing your conversation with bits of personal (but not too personal!) information can help make a connection.

It is essential that you know the candidate's past record related to the issue that you bring. You can find this out through press reports, press releases, previous conversations, speeches, voting records, or word-of-mouth (confirm!). Again, your association's lobbyist can assist you with voting records.

Know your topic. It may seem self-evident, but don't ever assume that you can just "wing-it" in a conversation with a legislator. Make sure your facts

are straight and supportable, and know both sides of the issue. If you don't know the answer to a question, say so and offer to get it.

While it is important for you be viewed as a political supporter, as someone to whom the candidate is indebted, *in the long run it is your credibility that will result in sustained influence.* Don't let your legislator get blind-sided by information that you failed to provide. Equipping a legislator to refute opposing arguments usually means you have to raise the opposing arguments and then provide the rebuttals. Don't hesitate to do so.

The candidate's mind-set. It is important to remember that a legislator is always crafting his or her own message *and that a legislator is always running for office.* Even as you are speaking, he or she is considering how the issue or position you are advocating is likely to play with voters. Your job is to construct your message in a way that serves the political needs of the office holder.

Keep it simple. Put your message in people terms. Avoid the temptation to speak of health issues in technical jargon. Express the issue or problem that you want addressed in terms of its impact on voters. Remember, you are one of those voters. Relay in simple terms how an issue affects you and the people you serve. Remember, too, that the candidate must be able to communicate your issue to others. Provide them with simple, straightforward language and illustrative anecdotes.

Keep it short, too. Always, always, always be concise. Time is short; attention spans even more so. If you really feel compelled to communicate a lot of detail, include it as an attachment.

We all like to be appreciated. Begin your message on a positive note. Like everyone else, legislators appreciate recognition of their important roles and accomplishments. Thank the legislator for something. Let him or her know how much you appreciate the effort and skill that went to achieving some outcome of major importance. If necessary, use your imagination, but don't be gratuitous.

Three-part message. An effective message has three parts, each of which must be communicated in order.

- *Value* -- The gut-level shared concern that establishes an emotional connection between you and your audience.
- *Idea* -- The concept or general principle that you are trying to get across.
- *Issue* -- The specifics of your issue.

Too often messages begin with the details of the issue before any real connection with the audience has been established. This is a particular problem for health care providers and educators. Think about how a clinical case is presented. It begins with the history and physical exam findings and then moves toward a diagnosis that explains as many of the details as possible. It is the exact *opposite* of the way you need to communicate to your legislators. With legislators you must start at the *value* level. Do not assume that a politician appreciates the "value" of the detailed proposal that you intend to lay out. Connect with them first. Fortunately, health is a fundamental value, and anything you might wish to communicate can be put in terms of improved health.

Having established some common ground on the value level, you can introduce the central idea of your particular issue. At the *idea* level you are discussing the root of the issue or the concept of what you wish the legislator to support.

Once you get conceptual agreement on your issue, you can go on to discuss the *details* of your proposal. In doing so it always pays to repeatedly show how the solution that you propose relates to the larger set of values and ideas that you have raised. Your task is to both educate and motivate. Conclude with a specific request and ask for a commitment to follow up.

You can make a difference. Communicate to your legislator that they can make a difference, that because of their particular qualifications they are uniquely able to address this issue. Their qualifications may be as simple as being a member of the community and, therefore, being able to fully appreciate the problem and address it. Or, they may have a professional background especially suited to the issue, or they may be on one of the health committees with jurisdiction over the issue. For whatever reason you can think of, or even invent, communicate to the legislator that he or she is especially able to address

your issue. Legislators need to be viewed by voters as someone who can make a difference; your job is to help meet that need.

No whining! Finally, don't whine. Always approach an issue with a well-developed solution in hand. You may not have all the answers, but you must present a plan that allows the candidate or elected official to articulate a solid approach to resolving the issue.

POSITION PAPERS

Position papers are simple and direct documents that serve as a tool for you to use in your contacts with elected officials and their staff members. Position papers reflect the priority issues that surface continually for service learning programs. Position papers are drafted in simple, easily grasped and straightforward language of the sort used in political campaigns and by the print and broadcast media. Although some position papers may seem brief or focused on only one particular aspect of a larger problem, they are designed to be short, concise, and to provide a "snapshot" of the issue that immediately gets your point across for the candidate or media. In politics, it’s essential that the message not get lost in unnecessary verbiage.

Generally speaking a position paper lays out an issue in one or two pages. It starts with the bottom line – a concise statement of your position or your legislative request. The next paragraph or two provides some background. Briefly stated, what is the problem you wish addressed? Why is this an important problem? In the next paragraph discuss your proposed solution. Conclude with a reiteration of your request. Position papers lend themselves to several specific applications.

Educating your legislator. Sharing your position papers with your legislator helps establish you as a resource on health care issues while informing the legislator and his or her staff of the priority issues in service learning programs.

Send to all candidates. Whether or not you intend to throw your support behind a particular candidate, you may wish to send your position papers to all

contenders for the seat. The responses are the barometer by which you can measure the sensitivity of a politician to service learning issues.

Use your position papers at issue forums. These public gatherings are designed precisely for legislators and candidates to answer questions from an audience, so don't be shy about presenting the issues of concern to you as a health professional, community health leader, and grassroots advocate.

Use your position papers to brief politicians speaking at CCPH-related meetings. When all is said and done, politicians want to be liked -- they want to deliver a message that constituents want to hear and to address their concerns if at all possible. Use your position papers to prep the legislator for a meeting or conference you may have helped to organize.

Share your story with the media. Where do those reporters get ideas for stories? More often than not the media receives a tip from influential sources such as members of boards. Sharing your position papers with the media is one useful way that you can educate reporters about key health care issues emerging in a campaign while helping to keep these issues in front of the candidates.

Repetition is the key to success! Keeping your position papers in the legislator's consciousness through repetition can lead to good things. If the legislator hears questions related to CCPH concerns often, then over time he or she will be responding to our concerns and perhaps even echoing our own answers frequently enough to make them his or her own. There is something to be said for the power of cognitive dissonance!

LETTER WRITING

A personal letter is the basic tool for expressing your views to legislators. The guidelines below build on the earlier section on Message Making. The correct address for a legislator's office may be obtained from many sources, including the telephone operator or on the legislator’s web site. Use personal stationary and write legibly or, preferably, type.

Keep your request or comments short and to the point. If at all possible, keep your letter to one page. Summarize your message in the first

paragraph. A reader should have a clear idea of your message from reading the first paragraph alone. Use the three-part format discussed in the section above on message making. If you want to communicate more detailed information, include it as an attachment.

Identify the subject clearly. Use simple direct language. If you want the politician to respond to your position papers, then say so. Don't clutter your request with extraneous, unrelated commentary.

Be polite but firm. Abide by the commonplace business letter conventions and include, if appropriate, a date by which you would like a response.

Avoid clichés that give your letter the appearance of a form letter. Legislators receive hundreds if not thousands of pieces of mail each week. Many are form letters that garner little attention. Make your letter stand out as a personal communication from a concerned and active constituent.

Always include your return address, phone number, and e-mail address to ensure you receive a response. U.S. Representatives and Senators will almost always respond. You will know you caught the attention of your legislator if the response is specific to the issues you raised and not just a form letter.

Always send a copy of your letter to the health aide. The health aide is your ally and your conduit to the legislator. Help them fulfill their responsibility by always keeping them in the loop.

MEETING WITH YOUR LEGISLATOR

Meeting with your legislator or his or her health aide is, perhaps, the most tried-and-true tool of legislative advocacy. The act of meeting with your legislator, especially in his or her Washington, DC office, can take on an intimidating aura. The guidelines below are intended to demystify this important event and make it both productive and enjoyable.

Scheduling the appointment. Depending on the timing and urgency of the meeting you may choose to meet either in the legislator’s home district office or in his or her Capitol office. Members of Congress have schedulers in each

office, who can advise you as to possible meeting dates. The farther in advance that you make the appointment the better. Treat the schedulers well; your access to the legislator depends on them. The health aides to most members of Congress are based in the Washington, DC office and travel to the district much less frequently than the member. If you want to meet with the health aide (most often, you do!) your options will be greater if you are able to travel to Washington.

When you call for the appointment, indicate that you are a constituent, state the reason for your visit and who will be attending. Leave a phone number or numbers where you can be reached right up until the time of the appointment, in case there is a need to reschedule. Many legislative offices are small and cramped. A party of two or three people is an appropriate size.

Almost always, your meeting will include the legislative aide who handles your issue, usually the health aide. In fact, it is often advisable to have a meeting with the health aide in advance of scheduling a meeting with the legislator. By doing so, the aide can be fully conversant in your issues, and he or she can brief the legislator in advance.

If you make an appointment in the Washington, DC office when Congress is in session, be prepared for cancellations, postponements, and delays. The schedule of hearings, meetings, and votes is beyond the control of most members of Congress. Not infrequently you will meet only with the health aide, or the portion of the meeting that includes your Representative or Senator will be relatively brief. This is <u>not</u> a bad thing. The health aide will heavily influences the legislator's position on any issue, and it is the aide with whom you will work mostly.

Prepare, prepare, prepare. This is a good time to review the section above on Message Making. Legislators are extremely busy, and you want to make the most of the brief time you will have for your meeting. You should go into the meeting not just knowing who is going to say what, but having rehearsed who is going to say what.

Following up. Be profuse in appreciation for the scheduler and receptionist as you leave the office. Immediately after the meeting, send a note thanking your legislator for the opportunity to meet and summarizing (in one page or less) the points covered during the meeting. Be sure to copy the health aide on the letter. If you promised to provide any additional material after the meeting, do so immediately.

Additional tips.

- *Small talk* - If you know the legislator personally or know of some personal information, it's okay to acknowledge that in your initial greeting. Excessive small talk wastes valuable time, there are other more appropriate opportunities for light banter.
- *Know both sides of the issue* - If there are arguments against your position on an issue, be prepared to state them and provide the counter-arguments. Don't let your legislator get blindsided by information you failed to provide.
- *No BS* - If you do not know the answer to a question, say so. Promise to get the answer or the additional information and communicate it back to the health aide by date-certain. Unless you have pockets full of money to donate to the legislator's campaign fund, the only thing of value that you have to trade on is your own credibility. Don't compromise it.
- *Stay in touch* - As your issue progresses through the legislative process, keep in touch with your legislator's office. This follow-up conversation will probably be with the health aide. If you have information to pass along, do so. Check in occasionally (but, not too often) on a bill's progress. Find out how the aide likes to communicate best (e.g., mail, phone, fax, e-mail).
- *Relationship building* - Ideally, your visit is either the start or the continuation of an ongoing relationship you are building with your legislator and his or her aide. You want your face to be familiar and your counsel to be trusted. You know you are getting somewhere when your legislator starts calling you for something other than money!

DEALING WITH THE MEDIA

Because so much of our political discourse occurs in the media, you may have occasion to be involved with the media in communicating your message. It is also important to remember that legislators thrive on media coverage. Any free coverage that you can help a legislator garner will be greatly appreciated. If at the same time you manage to get some exposure of issues of importance to service learning programs, so much the better!

In addition, legislators regularly follow the opinion pages of local media to get a sense of how constituents feel about key issues. Becoming a presence either through opinion-editorials or letters to the editor can help position you with the legislator and the media as an expert in the community.

While it is unlikely that you will ever bear primary responsibility for dealing with the media, having some basic understanding of how the media works will enable you to identify opportunities when media coverage can work to your advantage. Moreover, it may help you to avoid running afoul of the media. Below is some basic guidance for media outreach.

Earned media. Earned media is a term that means making news and gaining publicity for your cause without paying for it. Legislative efforts and campaigns thrive on free media coverage. Earned media also gives a legislator credibility that they cannot get through paid advertisements. Being a newsmaker is important to positioning a legislator as someone who is worthy of holding public office. In any case, paid advertising is very expensive and often beyond the means of many candidates, especially challengers and those seeking state and local offices.

You can help generate earned media in a number of ways. For example, suppose you invite a legislator to tour your office or to address your board. Let the legislator's press secretary know the press is welcome to the event and that you will work with them to accommodate the media. Also tell the press secretary that you are willing to talk to the media as a CCPH advocate.

Working with the legislator's press secretary. Someone, and usually just one person, in a legislator's office or political campaign is in charge of media contacts. Generally speaking, it is only the press secretary and the legislator

who are allowed to speak for the legislator. He or she controls the coverage of the legislator, so you need to be careful and aware of his or her turf. If you are going to try to help garner some media attention for the legislator, then acquaint yourself with the press secretary and coordinate all efforts to arrange media coverage with that individual. He or she will also want to draft much of the press material. You may wish to be available to talk to the media as a health professional, community health leader, and grassroots advocate. In addition, tell the press secretary they can quote you in their press materials -- but make certain they clear those quotes with you before they send the release out.

Generating earned media coverage. There are several opportunities for you to work with the legislator's office to help generate earned media coverage:

- Develop a newsletter for colleagues or the community and distribute it to the media.
- Announce an endorsement of a position that your legislator has taken by a group of CCPH advocates and put out a press release announcing the endorsement.
- Create a health issues task force for the legislator and have the legislator's office announce its formation.
- Release your position papers to the media and arm your legislator with the best responses.
- Organize a VIP visit to your office and arrange media coverage.
- Write an opinion column on health care issues in your community.
- Working with the press secretary, invite the media to any functions you organize.
- Draft a letter to the editor in response to an important story or development.

HOSTING A VISIT TO YOUR OFFICE OR FACILITY

Visits by legislators to your office or facility are an effective way to build ongoing relationships. Legislator visits illustrate how your ability to meet local health needs relates to legislative issues and are an excellent tool for advocacy. Such visits also provide a powerful visual image of your commitment to improving community health. Legislative visits showcase your strengths and

allow you to selectively highlight your challenges. You are offering your legislator an opportunity to see first-hand how a service learning program operates and to see the positive effect you have on the health of the community. You are also offering an opportunity to meet with board members, staff, and other involved community members whose votes the legislator would like to have. In turn, the visit is an opportunity to establish yourself as a source of insightful and credible information to the legislator. You want to establish the kind of relationship where your legislator and his or her health staff member will call you for advice when he or she is asked to take a position on specific health-related issues. The following guidelines will help you plan a successful visit.

Determine the objectives for the visit. Decide what issues you want to discuss and how best to link the issues visually with the operations of your facility. Find out if your legislator has a particular interest and cater to it.

Decide on your message. Keep it simple.

Issue the invitation in writing. You may want to send one invitation to the candidate's home or office address and one to the campaign. Offer a range of dates to accommodate busy schedules.

Announce the legislator's visit to all board members and staff. Once the visit is confirmed, promote it throughout your community (to colleagues, employees, board members, coalition partners, committee members) by distributing a brief biography of the legislator and information about the issues you will discuss.

Alert local health care reporters and suggest that they cover the legislator's visit. Publicity is a valuable commodity to legislators, and it is also good for your facility. Work closely with the legislator's press aide on publicity and news coverage.

Offer to provide or arrange transportation. If your legislator is flying in for the event, arrange to have a driver meet him or her at the airport and provide transportation back after the visit.

Provide the legislator information about your program prior to the visit. For example, include the total number of employees, the range of programs and collaborations, special accomplishments or challenges.

Map a "tour." Develop a tour schedule and route that illustrates the objectives you set for the visit. Know when the legislator has to leave and allow for extra time if the candidate wants to remain longer in one location.

Conducting the visit. If possible, begin the visit in your office. Provide the candidate with an overview of important facts about your program, including the range of community needs you are attempting to address, the programs you have developed to meet those needs, the range of collaborations in which you participate, the challenges of funding and changing health care delivery systems. Be sure to introduce staff. The staff and board members that the candidate encounters during the tour are the candidate's voters. Have someone take photographs during the visit. Generally, black and white photographs will be more useful to the media and for your own publications.

Following up. Send a written thank-you note to the legislator, reiterating the points discussed during the visit. Forward any photographs taken during the visit for the legislator to use in his or her own publications. Also, publish the photos and information about the visit in your program's newsletter. Send press clips about the visit that appeared in local newspapers and internal publications to the legislator and his or her press aide. Update the legislator on developments in your program, indicating how your program will be affected by current legislative proposals. Continue to discuss issues of interest by offering to meet with the legislator's staff and serve as a resource on health issues.

HEALTH ADVISORY COMMITTEES

If you would like your contribution to a legislator to relate directly to your expertise as a health professional, then forming or participating on a health advisory committee may be an important opportunity. Health advisory committees are mutually helpful to CCPH advocates and legislators. The legislator receives expert advice on current and emerging health issues that is useful in the formation of position papers, legislative proposals, and speeches.

You become an expert source of information on community-based health professions' education issues, gain direct access to the legislator, and have a rare opportunity to advance policies important to CCPH.

PERSISTENCE PAYS

If you have visited with your legislator, hosted a tour of your program, raised money for your legislator's campaign, or generally made yourself indispensable as a health policy advisor, you are in an advantageous position; keep up the good work. Your task now is to stay connected -- telephone, write, fax, e-mail, and visit your legislator on issues important to CCPH. Get to know his or her staff and maintain that health advisory committee you started.

Beyond frequent contact, your task is to keep issues that are important to CCPH in the spotlight. You can do this by writing articles for your organization's newsletter (and make sure your legislators' offices are on the mailing list) and by sending any press releases to your legislators. Be assured that legislators read carefully local newspapers and follow press reports, so take advantage of any chance you have to talk about service learning issues with the media. In addition, utilize your position papers on CCPH issues -- an important way to alert your legislators to CCPH legislative priorities.

FUND RAISING/POLITICAL GIVING

Over the long run, the best way to ensure that federal, state, and local legislators and other policy makers support positions favorable to CCPH is to help elect candidates whose views reflect those of CCPH advocates. Because political campaigns are expensive and depend on voluntary funding, contributions to like-minded candidates build good will and boost their chances for election. There are three main reasons why people contribute to campaigns: (1) to support well-qualified candidates whose positions on important issues are similar to their own; (2) to express appreciation to candidates, especially incumbents, for supportive actions and comments; and (3) to improve opportunities to be heard by legislators and other elected officials.

Money makes politics go. Money, some political pundit once said, is the mother's milk of politics. Political consultants often advise candidates to spend

half their money on raising more money. While having the largest war chest does not guarantee victory, lack of funds has felled many a qualified candidate. *The reality is that in politics, money talks, and after the campaign is over those who are remembered most are those who helped raise the money.*

Candidates, both incumbents and challengers, engage in continual fund raising. While contributing to an election campaign does not automatically translate into political favoritism, individuals who either contribute to election campaigns or who sponsor fund raising events definitely earn the gratitude of elected officials. The influence of money on politics remains controversial, but there is no doubt that money buys a degree of access. Campaign financing is a tool that you can choose to use or not to use, but you should know that it is there and that others will use it to great effect. Following are some of the ways you can help raise money for political candidates.

Contribute directly to the candidate. Political fundraising works on the "snowball" principle: contributions received early in the election cycle help the campaign attract additional support by demonstrating public confidence in the candidate. A check sent early will be doubly appreciated. It will also get you on a list for future fundraising solicitations. If you support an incumbent, consider making small contributions several times a year. Legislators review the list of incoming contributions, and it is to your advantage to have your name appear on that list with some regularity.

Volunteer early in the campaign to serve on the candidate's finance committee. The campaign finance committee is responsible for raising the amount of money deemed necessary to win the race. Each member usually commits to raising a certain amount of money and fulfills that commitment.

Host a fundraising event featuring the candidate. In contrast to other forms of campaign fundraising (direct mail, phone solicitations) a hosted event provides you and your guest contributors with an immediate return on your investment of time and money. You will have direct access to the candidate and be able to discuss your priority issues with him or her in person at a time when he or she is most likely to be receptive to your message. Also, candidates would

much prefer to fill their Federal Election Commission reports with contributions from their home states or districts rather than from big business or out-of-state contributors.

Legal Issues. While non-profit, tax-exempt organizations may not make political contributions, the right to make individual political contributions is a constitutionally protected expression of free speech. Nevertheless, contributions are regulated by federal and state laws. Federal law allows a person to give up to $1,000 to each candidate per election. Individuals are also allowed to give up to $5,000 to a Political Action Committee (PAC). There is an aggregate ceiling of $25,000 a year in total contributions each person can make to federal candidates. Laws for state elections are different and vary considerably. You should be familiar with your state's laws and regulations regarding campaign contributions.

ADVOCACY METHODS FOR ASSOCIATIONS

An important role for associations is the orchestration of the advocacy efforts of its members. A well-organized and coordinated advocacy effort multiplies the impact of each member's efforts and makes efficient use of volunteer member time. Four standard components of association legislative strategy are discussed below: legislative coalitions, key contact programs, constituent campaigns, and the role of a lobbyist.

Legislative coalitions. Coalitions or alliances are essential to the success of many legislative efforts. They combine the strengths of various people and groups to create a team that is stronger than the sum of the individuals involved. A successful coalition should attempt to include a wide array of groups or people who bring a variety of perspectives to the legislation. A diverse group will be able to approach legislators from different vantage points and with different credible arguments.

Another reason for the effectiveness of coalitions is that legislators do not want to be in the position of refereeing battles between opposing interest groups. In attempting to do so, legislators will almost always disappoint some group and thereby create an adversary. It is a cardinal rule of politics that your enemies are

much more vocal and strident than are your friends. When interest groups come together and present a unified position on an issue or a bill, legislators can support the coalition's position without incurring the risk of creating enemies. An effective coalition effort can provide the winning edge to a legislative effort.

Key contact programs. A key contact program is an important tool for orchestrating constituent lobbying. A successful key contact system ensures that at least one dedicated and dependable member of the CCPH network is assigned to each elected official serving on the key health committees of the U.S. Congress. The activities of key contacts are coordinated by a legislative committee or the legislative staff. Besides maintaining an ongoing relationship with their legislators, key contacts respond to action alerts by contacting their legislators at crucial points in the legislative process. For example, at the time a state legislature's health committee is scheduled to consider a bill funding community-based education programs, the key contacts for each member of that committee would receive an action alert asking them to contact their legislator and urge support for the funding proposal. Action alerts provide specific instructions regarding the issue at hand, when to contact your legislator, and the content of the message to be communicated. Action alerts are sent by mail, fax, e-mail, or via a web site. In a well-functioning key contact system, key contacts are supported by a detailed manual on being an effective key contact, a biweekly legislative update, legislative briefings conducted at the annual meetings, and a web site that provides weekly legislative updates.

Grassroots lobbying. In recent years, grassroots lobbying has become a widely used tool in the legislative process. Electronic data and communications systems make it possible to quickly identify and communicate with constituents in a highly efficient and targeted fashion. Membership lists can now be sorted by legislative district, which makes it possible to individually target mailings to constituents of lawmakers serving on health committees. These targeted mailings typically provide a brief summary of a legislative issue and specific guidance on how to communicate with their legislators.

In the final analysis, your success or failure in dealing with federal and state legislation is squarely in the hands of individual members of the CCPH network. A national or state organization can organize and facilitate the direct involvement of CCPH professionals in the political process, but it cannot substitute for that involvement.

The role of lobbyists. Lobbyists represent interests of members of the organization for whom they work. Typically they advise their organizations regarding the legislative process and legislative strategy, monitor developments related to legislation of interest to the organization, and promote the positions of their organization before to the members of the Congressional committees with jurisdiction over those issues. Lobbyists work primarily on the basis of long-term relationships with the staff members of key legislators and committees.

An association may hire one or more lobbyists as full-time employees or it may contract with a lobbying firm for either part-time or full-time representation. In contracting with a lobbying firm, an association may receive a limited range of services such as information gathering and monitoring or it may contract for the full range of lobbying activities.

For a small association, hiring a lobbyist can be an important adjunct to member advocacy efforts, yet need not be an expensive undertaking. For example, an association can contract with a lobbying firm for part-time information gathering services. What the association will receive is current information about the legislative process related to bills of interest. This information can be used to direct the association's legislative strategy; e.g., when to prepare testimony for a committee hearing or when to activate the key contact program. The limited use of a lobbyist in this fashion can spare volunteer members from having to spend a large amount of time and effort monitoring the legislative process from afar.

There are several considerations in hiring a lobbyist. First and foremost, an association must delineate its expectations of a lobbyist within the context of its overall legislative goals and strategy. Second, an association must identify potential lobbyists who are already dealing with the association's issues.

Lobbying firms and individual lobbyists generally concentrate on a narrow range of issues and the particular committees with oversight of those issues. Third, an association must negotiate for a range of lobbying services that fit within its budget.

As with any employee, hiring a lobbyist requires checking references. Sometimes there can be a conflict of interest because of the different clients that a particular lobbyist represents. Usually such conflicts can be resolved by setting clear expectations between the parties. Rarely it is necessary to find a different lobbyist.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Translating the ideas and ideals of CCPH and other organizations into real programs unavoidably involves the legislative process. The following recommendations represent a modest set of actions that the CCPH network might consider in promoting its agenda.

1. **Offer legislative advocacy training.** Legislative advocacy training should be made readily available at CCPH meetings. A legislative advocacy training program consists of the following elements: (1) the fundamentals of advocacy, (2) the substance of current policy issues, (3) a take-home handbook, (4) operating a key contact system, (5) a grassroots campaign, and (6) legislative coalitions. Readily available templates exist for a concise and practical handbook on legislative advocacy. The handbook should cover both federal and state legislatures.
2. **Convene a legislative committee**. The legislative committee would be responsible for developing a legislative strategy and overseeing its implementation. A companion legislative strategy should be developed for state legislative action. In addition, the committee would be responsible for developing an offering legislative advocacy training and responding to the other recommendations on this list.
3. **Commission policy papers**. Upon the identification of the key legislative issues facing CCPH programs, concise policy papers should be developed for use on the federal and state levels. Policy papers are used to train CCPH

advocates on the substance of key legislative issues as well as to represent CCPH's interests directly.

4. **Develop a key contact system.** The legislative committee should recruit CCPH advocates who are constituents of members of the key Congressional committees to serve as key contacts. Key contacts require training and ongoing support through a web site or other communications means. A similar model should be developed for state level advocacy efforts.
5. **Develop the capacity for grassroots lobbying.** Developing the capacity for grassroots lobbying involves the creation of a database for sorting of health professionals, community health leaders, and grassroots advocates by legislative district. It can be accomplished in-house or through commercial vendors. The legislative committee would be responsible for activating the grassroots system at key points during Congressional consideration of important legislation.
6. **Join or develop a legislative coalition.** The legislative committee should explore the development of a legislative coalition on community-based health professions' training issues by identifying and approaching organizations with interests similar to those of CCPH.
7. **Consider hiring a lobbyist.** After developing a legislative strategy, the legislative committee should explore the utility and feasibility of hiring a lobbyist.

RESOURCES

State Legislative Information. Most, if not all, states maintain web sites with a standardized URL: http://www.state.(state postal abbreviation).us. Links to the state legislature are readily identifiable. These legislative web sites contain information on legislators, committee jurisdictions and assignments, current and past bills, and the legislative history of current bills.

Federal Legislative Information. Information on U.S. representatives and senators, committee jurisdictions and assignments, current and past bills, and the legislative history of current bills can be obtained from the Library of Congress' web site: http://thomas.loc.gov/. This web site has many links to federal information resources.

Advocacy Handbooks. Many professional associations to which CCPH advocates are likely to belong (e.g., American Public Health Association) have produced excellent legislative advocacy handbooks.

Campaign Donations. Information regarding campaign donations can be obtained from the Federal Election Commission at (800) 424-9530 or (202) 219-3440, or your State Secretary of State's Office for additional information. Information on federal campaign finance laws can also be obtained at http://www.fec.gov/pages/fecfeca.htm. Information and links to state campaign financing information can be found at http://www.campaignfinance.org/.

Books. The following two books are standard reading for those who steep themselves in the federal legislative process.

Deering, C.F. & Smith, S.S. (1997) Committees in Congress. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Books.

Redman, E. (1973) Dance of Legislation. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

AUTHOR:

Charles G. Huntington, PA, MPH
Associate Director
Connecticut AHEC Program
University of Connecticut School of Medicine
263 Farmington Avenue, MC 3960
Farmington, CT 06030-3960
Phone: (860) 679-7968
Fax: (860) 679-1101
E-mail: huntington@adp.uchc.edu

Charles Huntington joined the faculty of the University of Connecticut School of Medicine in June 1996, as associate director of the Connecticut Area Health Education Center Program and assistant professor in the Department of Community Medicine and Healthcare. Prior to coming to Connecticut he spent ten years in Washington, DC, serving as director of the Washington Office of the American Academy of Family Physicians. Mr. Huntington began his health care career as a physician assistant, having practiced for eleven years in a rural underserved area of Upstate New York. He is a graduate of Williams College, completed his physician assistant training at the Bowman Gray School of Medicine, earned a Masters in Public Health from the George Washington University, and was a Pew Health Policy Fellow at the University of Michigan School of Public Health. He is also part of Community-Campus Partnerships for Health's Advocacy and Policy Committee.