

Advocacy 101

Ellen Teller
Food Research Action Center

Mary Sullivan
Food Bank of Alaska



What is Policy?

- **What is Policy?** *Noun: policy; plural noun: policies.* A course or principle of action adopted or proposed by a government, party, business, or individual.



Who Are Policy Makers?

- Legislators (state legislators and federal)
- State administrators
- Municipal or borough leaders and staff
- Internal agency/organization leadership, such as an ED or Board of Directors
- **anyone who is in a **position of power to influence** a decision that impacts policy and/or your practice environment or issue topic**



What is Advocacy?

- “Advocacy means giving a voice to an interest or need. Activities include educating community leaders on your issue, lobbying for specific legislative proposals, commenting on proposed regulations, and meeting with [various] boards [or commissions], to name a few. The target of your advocacy campaign will depend on your goal. You can choose to focus on a local community, a borough or municipality, a state and/or the federal government. The most successful advocacy campaigns recognize the interconnected layers where influence can be made, and effectively use the voices of staff, families...community leaders and others who share a common vision.”

--Healthy Families America



What is Diving In?



- Definitions to get us on the same page.
 - What is “Diving In”?
 - Engaging the right advocates at the right time with the right message for the right “ask” of the right person/decision maker. It is calculated, but involves some “risk”.
 - What “Diving In” is not:
 - Reckless; lacking strategy, evidence & “human story” balance, or preparation. It is not “dangerous”.



Advocacy, Grassroots & Grasstops

- Not necessarily interchangeable terms
 - Grassroots is one type of advocacy *strategy* that can include:
 - Coalition building, volunteer and community stakeholder mobilization
 - Paid media or earned media awareness campaign
 - Site visits or town halls or other public forums
 - Other strategies can include:
 - Testifying
 - Finding the right access point within the legislature to ask a question, provide a helpful piece of information etc.
 - Written support
 - Direct Action Organizing strategies



Community
Leaders,
Experts



Coalitions,
mass
mobilization

What Keeps Us From Diving In?

- Hesitancy (what are our fears?)...
- Time costs...
- Opportunity costs...
- Financial costs...
- Other??



Examples of Successful Advocacy Campaigns

- Formation of Governor's Food Resource and Development Working Group, passed House Resolution
- Nutritional Alaskan Foods for Schools appropriations
- Farm to School funding
- 2014 Farm Bill – no cuts to SNAP for AK, protected other nutrition programs



Keys to Successful Advocacy

- **STRATEGIC**
 - We must research and plan our campaign carefully.
- **SERIES OF ACTIONS**
 - Advocacy is not simply one phone call, one petition, or one march but a set of coordinated activities.
- **DESIGNED TO PERSUADE**
 - We must use ideas or provide arguments that convince people that the desired change is important and they will support it.



Keys to Successful Advocacy

- **TARGETED**
 - We must aim our persuasion efforts at specific people who have the power to make our advocacy campaign successful
- **BUILD ALLIANCES**
 - We must work with many stakeholders to increase the impact of our campaign.
- **RESULTS IN CHANGE**
 - Our advocacy campaign must result in positive change in the lives of the people affected by the problem. For our advocacy to be effective we must persuade the targets of our advocacy campaign that

what we want is what they want



Keys to Successful Activism

- Make your activism local and personal.
 - Local information: find **local** and **specific** information related to the policy ideas you support. Be sure to reference these figures in your letters and phone calls.
 - Local events: band together with other [stakeholders] and hold local events, highlighting the issues you care about. **Invite your Member of Congress to participate** in your events.
 - Local staff: **build relationships** with your Member of Congress's **local staff**. They may be the key to getting relevant information and arguments in front of the real decision-maker.



Keys to Successful Activism, Cont'd.

- Personable: effective activism **should not be antagonistic and angry**. Everyone likes to talk and work with people they like. Be likable!
- Personal: as you build relationships with staff and your Members of Congress, be sure to emphasize your policy ideas and **why you think this way**



Direct Action Organizing

- Framework to guide strategy building efforts
 - A problem is identified and messaged as an “issue”
 - Short and Long Term Goals Defined
 - Assets and Challenges are Identified
 - Action Steps are Identified
 - **Bring Many People to Face the Decision Maker**
 - Decision Maker Reacts
 - Actions are Evaluated and Refined, Regroup



Who Do We “Bring”?

- Depends upon the situation (political climate and other internal/external factors)
 - Food Industry Leaders, Directors, CEOs
 - Board Members
 - Clinicians, Patients
 - Consumers
 - Farmers
 - Schools
 - Other Constituents or Community Stakeholders
 - Whomever the decision maker listens to!



Engaging All Levels of Staff for Advocacy

- “Most discussions of decision making assume that only senior executives make decisions or that only senior executives' decisions matter. This is a dangerous mistake. Decisions are made at **every level** of the organization, beginning with individual professional contributors and frontline supervisors. These apparently low-level decisions are extremely important in a knowledge-based organization. Knowledge workers are supposed to know more about their areas of specialization—for example, tax accounting—than anybody else, so their decisions are likely to have an impact throughout the company. Making good decisions is a crucial skill at **every level**. It needs to be taught explicitly to everyone in organizations that are based on knowledge.” –Peter Drucker, Harvard Business Review



More on Engaging All Levels

- “Those who build great companies understand that the ultimate throttle on growth for any great company is not markets, or technology, or competition, or products. It is one thing above all others: **the ability to get and keep enough of the right people...** The moment you feel the need to tightly manage someone, you've made a hiring mistake. The best people don't need to be managed. Guided, taught, led--yes. But not tightly managed.” —Jim Collins, Good to Great for the Social Sectors

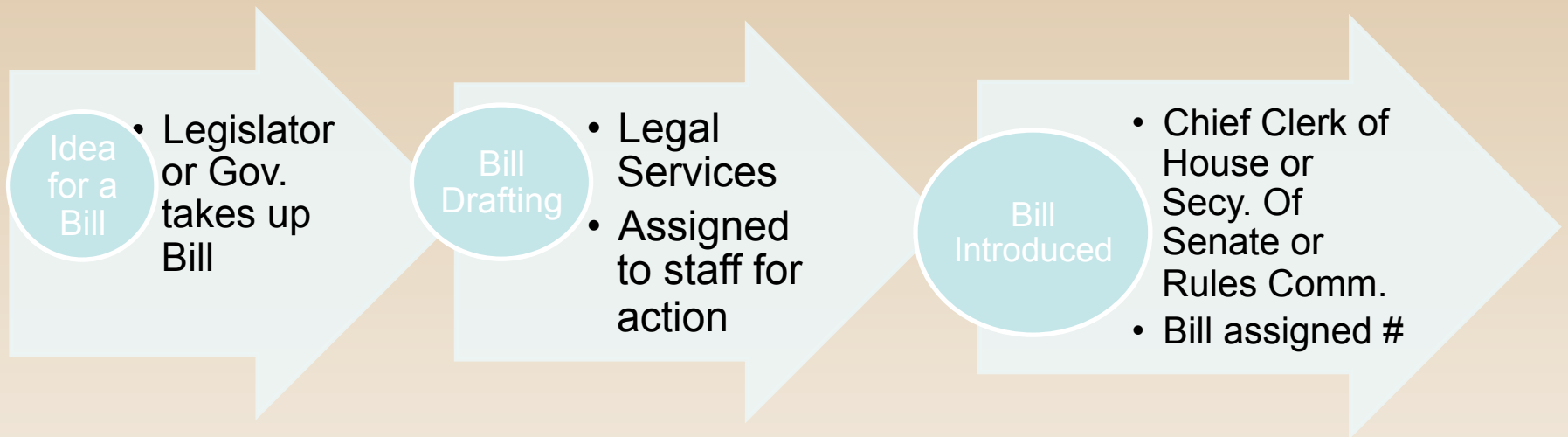


Legislative & Budget Process Resources

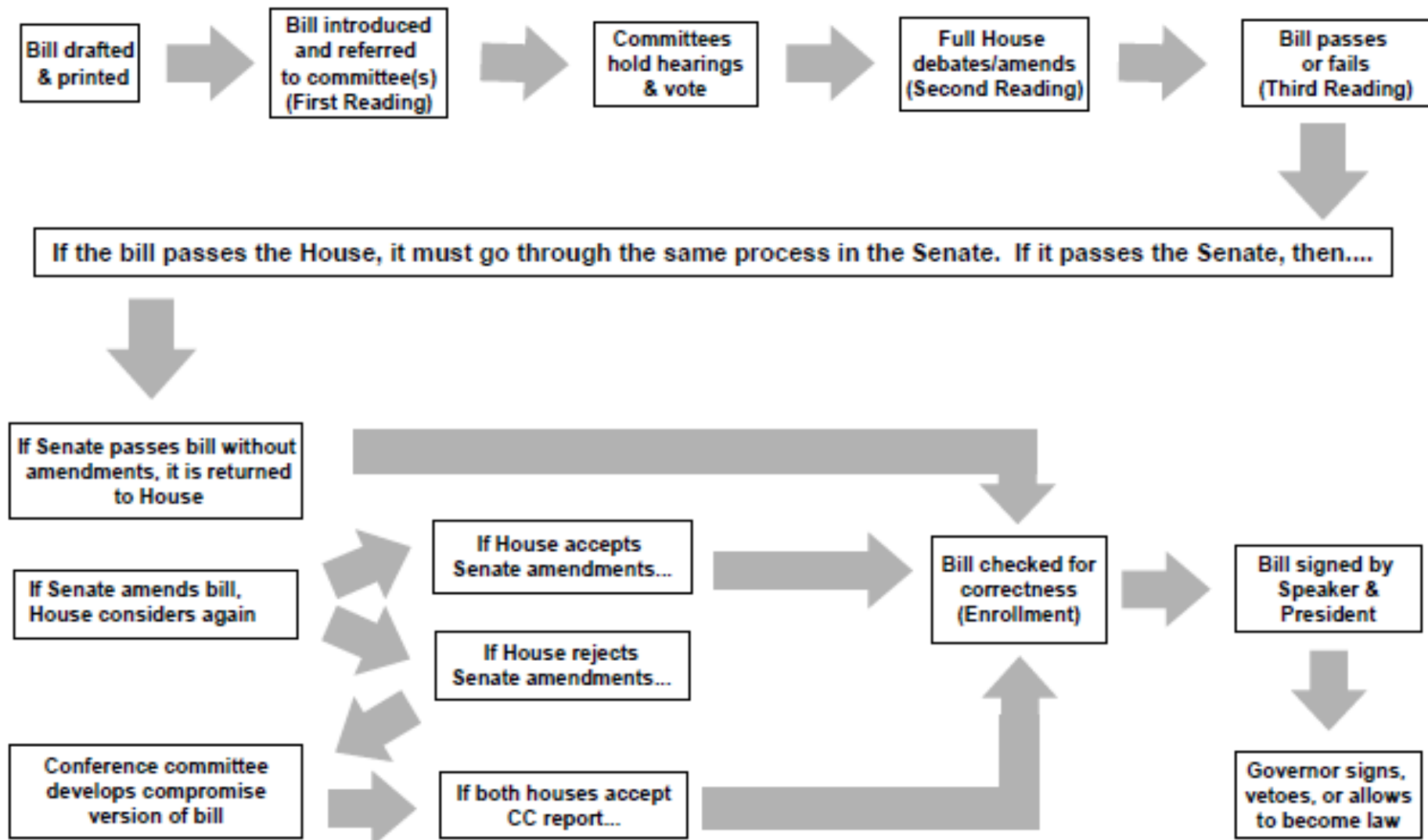
- Legislative Process:
<http://w3.legis.state.ak.us/docs/pdf/legprocess.pdf>
- Budget Process:
<http://w3.legis.state.ak.us/docs/pdf/budgproc.pdf>



Legislative Process/Flow



STEPS IN THE PASSAGE OF A HOUSE BILL*

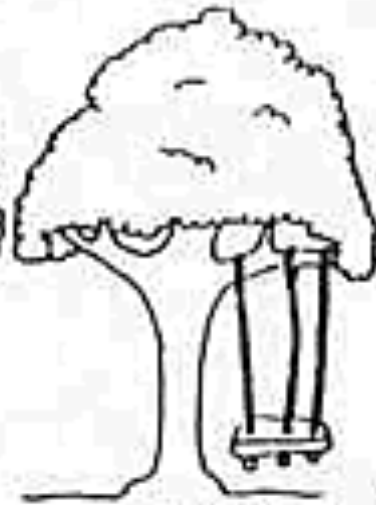


*This chart shows the progress of a bill originating in the House of Representatives. For a Senate bill, the process would begin on the Senate side. See "Legislative Process in Alaska" for more information.

The Legislative Process



As legislator introduced the bill



As committee reported it



As House amended it



As Senate amended it



As passed into law



As state agency implemented it



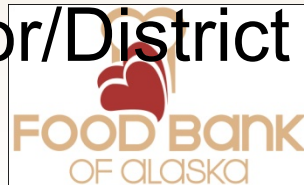
What the budget allowed



What the taxpayer really wanted

BASIS Basics

- <http://w3.legis.state.ak.us/> v
 - Find most recent committee action
 - Follow certain Bills
 - Watch hearings (gavel to gavel)
 - Look up documents related to legislation
 - General information on AK Constitution and Legislative Process
 - Contact and Committee Information
 - LIO and Legislator/District Information



A Word About Persuasion

- What persuades people effectively?
 - Values/Ideology
 - Financial or other material realities
 - Facts/Evidence
 - Political realities
 - External pressures
 - Advice/perspectives from trusted sources
- What tends to be less persuasive?
 - Guilt
 - Exaggerating facts
 - Lack of accountability & follow-through
 - Others?



Why Host A Visit

- Outreach and educate influential people
- Correct misconceptions
- New insights may influence the influencer!
- Your voice can be the difference in how this person prioritizes funding, interprets regulation, etc.
- Your “boots on the ground” experience is **VITALLY** important – you are the expert!



Why Host a Visit? cont'd.

- We want people of influence to care about food policy issues in their community so that they can:
 - **Allocate funds**
 - **Remove barriers to services, farmers, consumers**
 - **Bring awareness** in the community to other influential people, such as donors



Why Host a Visit? cont'd.

- Policy makers WANT to hear from you.
- They WANT the photo op.
- They WANT to know about issues impacting their district!



Tools for Setting Up Visits

- Checklists and templates from FRAC
 - <http://frac.org/leg-act-center/advocacy-tools/>
- Checklists and templates from Western Region Organization of Resource Councils
 - <http://worc.org/HowToGuides/>



Please Don't Ever Do's

- Never be critical of personalities: make your points about issues.
- Never lose your cool: stay calm.
- Never tell half-truths: don't distort or conceal important facts.
- Never waste a VIP's time: be brief and to the point.
- Never make public assumptions about another person's motives.



Please Do!

- Do have an extremely productive visit!
- Do have others present with you who are knowledgeable on the issues you plan to discuss.
- Do have others present with you who are influential and might grab the ear/attention of the policy maker



Please Do! Cont'd.

- Do deal with only one (or at most two) issue(s) at a time
- Do know relevant legislation and opposing views on your issue.
- Do find common ground and be willing to consider a compromise.
- Do express appreciation for the VIP's work, support, time, etc.



Will You Commit?

- Child Nutrition Reauthorization
- Alaska Food Policy Council - State and Federal Legislation and Appropriations
- Farm Bill Implementation
- Alaska's Food Economy Assessment



What is Child Nutrition Reauthorization?

- Every 5 years, Congress reexamines the laws that govern child nutrition programs. There are three laws that govern the Child Nutrition Programs:
 - The Richard B Russell National School Lunch Act
 - The Child Nutrition Act of 1966
 - The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004. Public Law 108-265 (which amended both the National School Lunch Act and the Child Nutrition Act).
- Collectively these laws are referred to as the Child Nutrition Reauthorization bill, or “CNR”.



Which Federal Nutrition Programs are Part of CNR?

- Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)
- National School Lunch Program (NSLP)
- School Breakfast Program (SBP)
- Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
- Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)
- WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program
- Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP)
- Special Milk Program



What Happened Last Time?

- The expansion of afterschool suppers nationwide.
- Elimination of caps on the number of sites and children nonprofit sponsors can serve through the Summer Food Service Program.
- Simplified enrollment for low-income children in school meal programs.
- Strengthening of nutrition standards for school meals and food sold in schools.
- Strengthening of nutrition standards for Child and Adult Care Food Program.



Commit to CNR

- To learn more about how to get involved with the advocacy efforts, email Mary Sullivan, Director of Advocacy and Agency Relations at msullivan@foodbankofalaska.org .
- FRAC's resource page for CNR
 - <http://frac.org/leg-act-center/cnr-priorities/>





Alaska Food Policy Council

**health.
self-reliance.
prosperity.**

Alaska Food Policy Council

- Food policies address, shape, or regulate the food system. They can promote or hinder safe, healthy, and effective food activities.
- The role of the AFPC is to collaborate on mutually beneficial solutions to food system problems. Provide recommendations and information regarding comprehensive policies that improve Alaska's food system.



Why Care About Alaska's Food Policy and Food System?



Alaska Food Policy Council

- Goal 1: All Alaskans have access to affordable, healthy (preferably local) foods.
- Goal 2: Alaska's food-related industries have a strong workforce and operate in a supportive business environment.
- Goal 3: Food is safe, protected, and supplies are secure throughout Alaska.
- Goal 4: Alaska's food system is more sustainable.
- Goal 5: Alaskans are engaged in our food system.



Farm Bill Implementation in AK

- US Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsac, calls it the food, farms, and jobs bill
- Much, much larger than just the nutrition title or farm subsidies
- \$3.5B in USDA funded projects for Alaska, mostly for rural



Farm Bill Implementation in AK

- Infrastructure
- Economic Development
- Potable Water projects
- Research
- Farming (and new farms) and Ranching
- Conservation



Farm Bill Implementation in AK

- The Emergency Food Assistance Program
- Commodity Supplemental Food Program
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
- Pilot projects for SNAP at farmer's markets
- Senior farmer's markets and more



AK Food Economy Assessment

- Ken Meter hired to do an assessment of Alaska's Food Economy
- Did town hall meetings all around the state, including some more rural areas
- Collected input and assembled a report, complete with recommendations for how to strengthen our food system.



Recommendations

- Ken's report contains 9 areas of recommended action
- These recommendations are posted around the room.
- Voting on your top three preferred actions



“You must maintain unwavering faith that you can and will prevail in the end, regardless of the difficulties, *AND at the same time, have the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be.*”—Jim Collins



Thank you!

Mary Sullivan, MSW

msullivan@foodbankofalaska.org

907-222-3113

