



CLCLT Community Policy and Advocacy Training

February 24, 2020

Agenda Overview



- Training Expectations
- General overview of public policy at different levels of government
- How is change made at each level of government
- Timelines for change opportunities
- Policies and/or funding differences
- How to advocate
- Lessons learned and any advice learned
- Questions and next steps

Training Expectations



- As much a guided conversation as a presentation
- Non-partisan conversation (for sake of CLCLT....and own well-being!)
- Some best practices, but mostly from personal experiences
- Government is slow to change...there are pros and cons to this
- Common sense usually prevails and change is possible
- \$/politics > relationships > doing the right thing for community

Levels of Government



- Neighborhood (Mpls.)
- City of Minneapolis
- Hennepin County
- State of MN
- Federal Level

Neighborhood Level (Mpls.)



- 81 Neighborhoods
- 70+ have some level of governance, potential funding, online presence
- Varying levels of autonomy and programs (examples)
- Only as strong as their funding, their leadership, and their staffing
- Relative timing of opportunities and geography matter
- Issues bring out residents
- Fairly easy to get on a committee or board agenda to present an idea
- Lots of changes influencing neighborhood happening right now

City of Minneapolis Level



- 13 wards (Council Members) for 425k residents plus the Mayor
- Strong City Council system
- Mayor is primarily PR, hires key staff, and proposes budget (\$1.5 billion)
- Streets, public works, fire, police
- Funding occurs through an annual budget process (Fiscal Year)
- Access to Council Members varies, being a constituent matters
- Policy initiatives can occur at any time, typically proposed at committee level
- Funding initiatives need to go through budget process
- Development occurs through longer range planning documents

Hennepin County Level



- 7 districts (County Commissioners) for 1.3 million people + County Administrator
- 45 municipalities in Hennepin County, including City of Minneapolis
- Control a huge budget of \$2.5 billion approved on an annual basis
- County controls HCMC, county roads, light rail infrastructure, human service funding
- Annual budget process, decisions mostly about funding and priorities
- A bit more difficult than city-level to meet with County Commissioners

State of Minnesota Level



- 67 Senate Districts, 134 House Districts, Governor and Departments
- 5 Senate Districts and 10 House Districts touch Minneapolis
- State budget is approximately \$20 billion/year with budget year start of July 1
- Legislative session typically February – May of each year (Budget vs. Bond year)
- State oversees Education, State Roads, Environment, Human Services, many more.
- Legislative processes somewhat similar for both funding and policy changes
- Fairly easy to meet with elected – especially when not in session, constituent matter

Federal Level



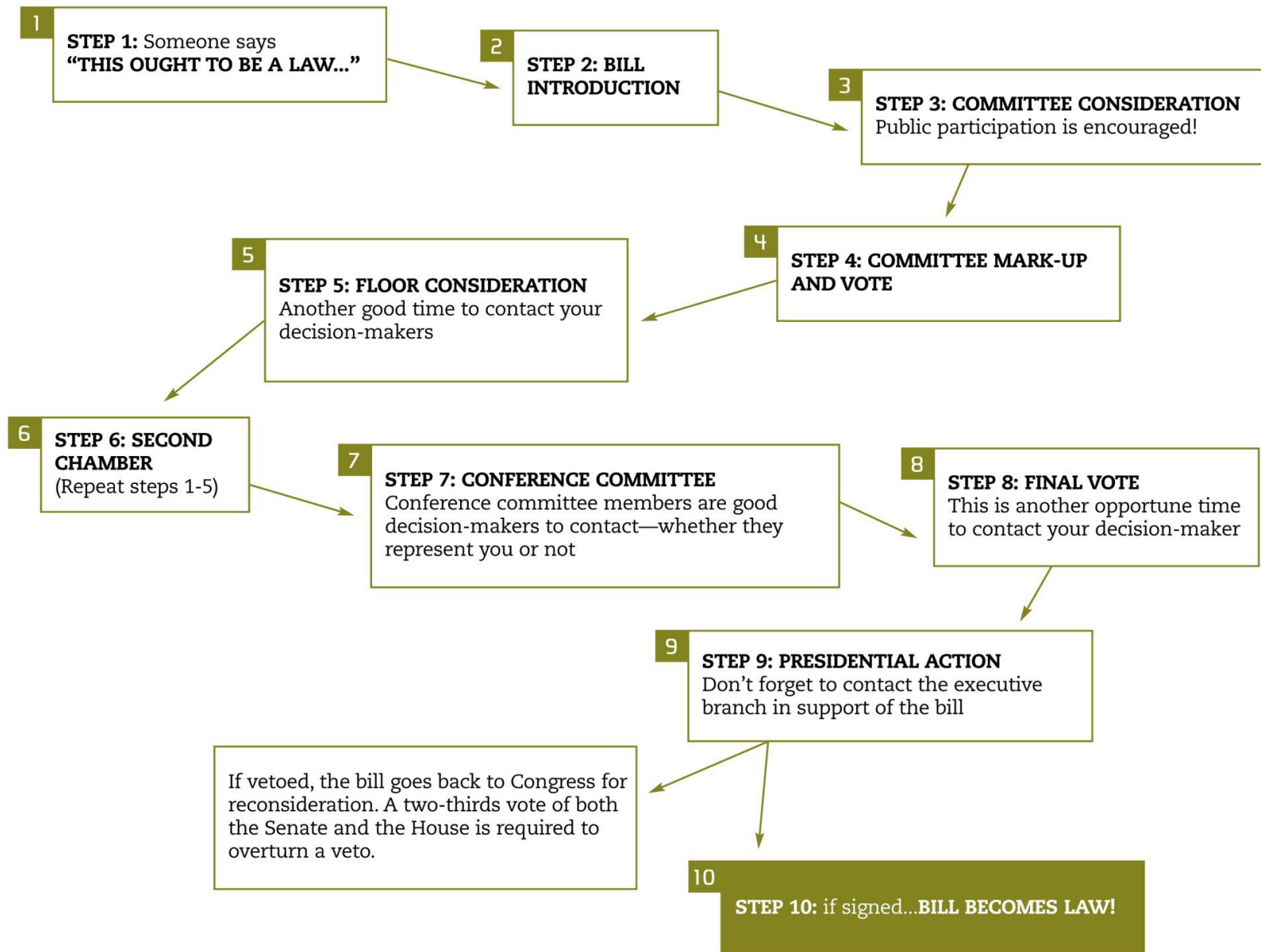
- 2 Senate Districts and 7 Congressional Districts in Minnesota
- Senators both represent the entire state. Only one member of Congress represents Mpls.
- Federal Budget is \$4.11 trillion (that's \$4,110,000,000,000!)
- Solely for comparison sake...US spends \$650 billion/yr. on military. The next 7 largest military countries spend \$600 billion collectively.
- Federal budget year begins October 1
- Each Congress has 2 sessions, each lasting 1 year. A new Congress always begins in January of odd-numbered years.
- The executive branch consists of the president and the various departments of the federal government. Each department is led by a secretary who is a member of the president's cabinet.
- Fairly difficult to get time with federal elected officials, mostly meet with staffers

State and Federal Level



Local (some), state, and federal government, has three independent branches:

- The legislative branch makes the laws. An example of the legislative branch at the local level could be a city council. An example of the legislative branch at the state and federal level includes the Senate and the House of Representatives.
- The executive branch carries out the laws and also has the power to set budgets. The executive branch includes mayors, governors, and the president, as well as cabinet members.
- The judicial branch interprets the law. The judicial branch includes courts at all levels of government.



State and Federal Level

Making Change



You don't have to be a legislative expert to effect change. Decision-makers do not necessarily have all the experience and information. They need to hear from people who do.

Opportune times to weigh-in:

- during committee hearings
- before key votes
- during the budget process—when budget is being created by executive branch and when being adopted by legislative branch
- before a bill reaches the governor's desk (State Level)

Decision-makers that need to hear from you include:

- your own decision-maker(s) and people of influence
- committee members and conference committee members
- board presidents (neighborhood), mayors (city), and governors (state)

Motivating Policymakers to Act



Effective advocacy involves identifying and persuading these policymakers to act on behalf of your issue. It is important to understand what motivates policymakers:

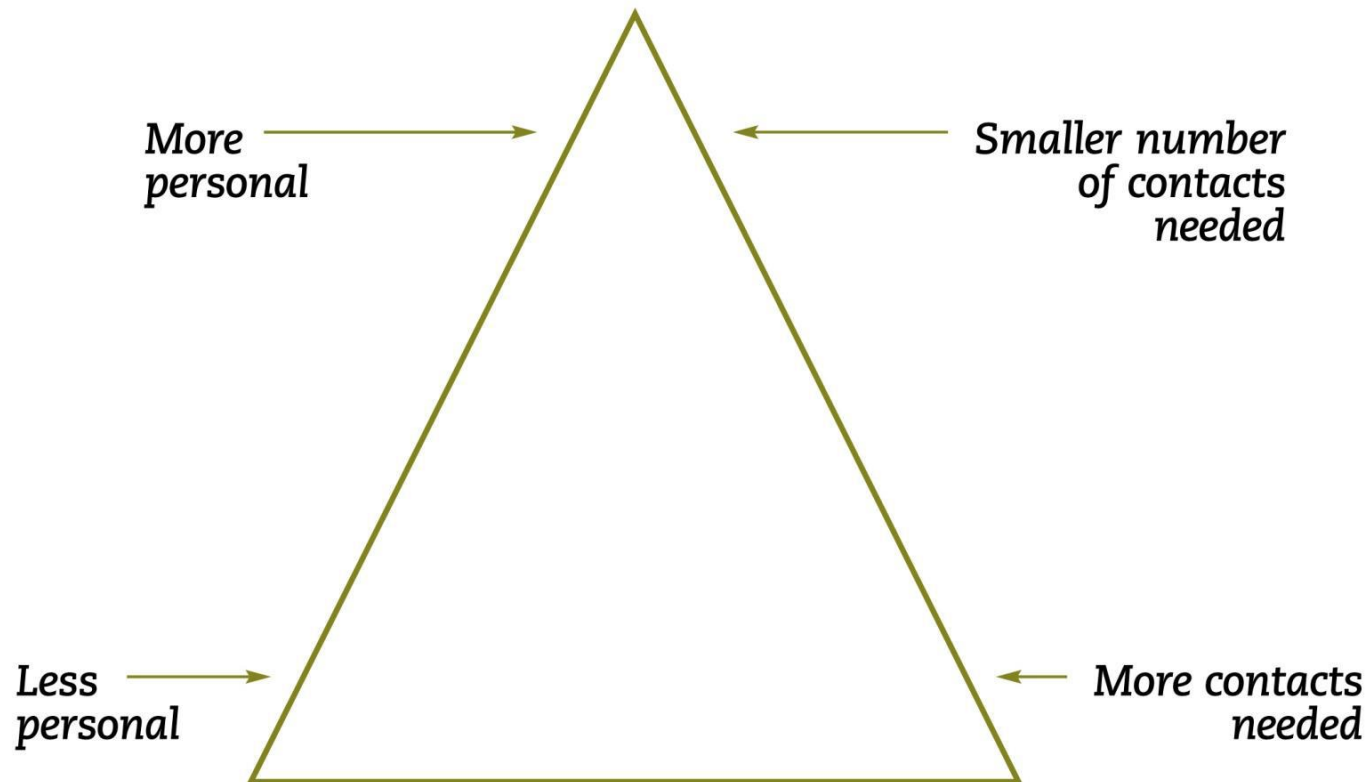
- Elected or appointed officials: Influenced by what their constituents think and value.
- Community leaders: Usually not elected, but their position and scope of influence depends on them being viewed as credible, well-liked, or fair. They are influenced by public opinion, but in a less direct way than an elected official.

Influencing Policymakers



- Policymakers are influenced by personal contact and communication.
- There are many different ways to influence a policymaker to act
- When choosing how you want to contact your policymaker, keep in mind that the more personal you can make your communication, the better.

The Contact Pyramid for Policymakers



When Calling on Policymakers



- **Plan:** Before you make the call, plan what you are going to say. Your phone call will be very brief, so keep your message simple and to the point.
- **Message:** Be sure to tell your story succinctly, why you care about your issue and why you need their support. Think about the key point and how your story underscores your point of view.
- **Call:** Make the call! Tell the policymaker that you are a client or constituent of their legislative district and/or community.
- **Staff or Message:** If you are calling a policymaker, you may not be able to reach them directly. Be prepared to talk to staff or to leave a succinct message instead.

When Writing Policymakers



- State that you are a client or a constituent: This matters because leaders are most interested in the opinions of people who live in their area.
- Personalize your letter: Research shows that personal letters have the most impact on decision-makers. If you are basing your letter on a form letter, rewrite it and consider using your personal stationery. This also gives you the chance to include your story, which is what will have the most impact.
- Local, local, local: Make a strong connection between your issue and what you and the policymaker see in your home community.
- Show restraint: Keep your letter brief—1 to 1 ½ pages at most.

When Emailing Policy Makers



- In the subject line of the message, state that you are a member of their community: This strategy will increase the likelihood that your message is read. (eg, Subject: Message from a constituent)
- If the e-mail is mass-produced, modify it: It doesn't take much time to insert your personal story and perspective, and it makes a big difference in making your e-mail credible rather than "canned."
- Follow up: Because e-mail is a more casual and often a mass-produced mode of communication, be sure that you are using other methods to persuade policymakers. Follow your e-mail with a phone call, personal letter or visit.

Texting + social media with Policymakers



- Texting has been an effective means...provided there is an existing relationship with policy maker.
- Electeds are typically dialed into twitter and facebook posts, but so must you to be effective.
- Policymakers also listen closely to public radio and read local newspapers
- Social media can work, but important to stay positive in messages

Meeting Policymakers



- Meeting with your elected official gives you the chance to interact with him or her in a way that is not possible through a letter or e-mail.
- Before the meeting: Plan out what you are going to share, including why you care about the issue and how it affects other people they represent. Be sure to include a direct “ask”.
- During the meeting: Allow time for dialogue and invite questions.
- After the meeting: Thank the policymaker for their time and let them know how they can reach you should they have questions. Send a thank you note, e-mail, or fax.

Policymakers – recap



- Effective advocacy - or getting policymakers to support your issue - is about letting decision-makers know what you think about the issues you care about.
- Through personal and ongoing contact, not only can you gain their attention, but you can ultimately build a relationship with your policymaker that will make them more likely to support your issue(s) in the future.

CLCLT priorities and opportunities



- Key is funding for permanent affordability > affordable homeownership > affordable housing.
- Key are policies that favor permanent affordability > affordable homeownership > affordable housing > programs/policies that support low-income households.
- Ongoing meetings with policymakers at all levels of government.
- Testimony a policy hearings and budget hearings
- Writing letters to the editor, stories on CLCLT, radio shows, social media

CLCLT priorities and opportunities



- Hosting policymaker conversations in wards/districts where there are numerous households who've purchased via the CLCLT.
- Day on the hill
- Attending policy meetings with CLCLT staff and board members
- Sharing stories and testimonials via video and/or written form
- Testifying at public hearings
- Chatting with policymakers when they see them at public events/forums

Questions/comments

