

Policy Revealed: Engaging in Public Policy to make a Difference

Gwen Wolford, Director, Government Affairs
College of Food, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences at
The Ohio State University

May 23, 2016



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL,
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES






What is Public Policy?

- Basic course of action adopted and pursued by a governmental entity
- Within Extension we often overlook many opportunities related to policy because of our focus on funding.
- As an organization that prides itself on teaching science-based principles we should also advise policy based on those principles






Key Attributes of Public Policy

- 
- Made in response to some sort of issue or problem that requires attention
 - What the government chooses to do or not do (implied) about a particular issue or problem
 - Oriented toward a desired goal or state; often intended to be the solution to a problem
 - Part of an ongoing process that does not always have a clear beginning or end, since decisions about who will benefit from policies and who will bear any burden resulting from the policy are continually reassessed and revised
 - Made by governments, even if the ideas come from outside government or through the interaction of government and the public






What public policy issues should Extension address? Who's Problem is it?

- Issues that Extension could address through public policy
- Who's problem is it? - identifying the correct jurisdiction and how to influence it
- When should an Extension professional become involved?





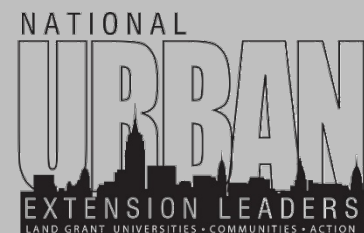
Become involved if....

- 
- ... you believe something is a priority. Then engagement and building effective relationships must become a regular and integral part of your job. The only way you will affect policy is to be regularly engaged with the people who can make change happen.



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL,
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES



How to Stay Informed

- Depends on your location and level of government you want to study
- Social Media!!!
- Ohio's only major newspaper that doesn't require a subscription seems to be the Cleveland Plain Dealer.
- For federal info, politico.com, Washington Post and the New York Times are my personal choices.
- Local governments provide a greater challenge but remember that all official proceedings are open records and you can ask to view a journal of those meetings at any time. The County Commissioners Association of Ohio provides newsletters each Friday to which Extension personnel could subscribe.



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL,
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES





How to Stay Informed (more)

- Subscription Services for a Fee:
 - For Ohio options include Gongwer News Service, gongwer-oh.com, Hannah News Service
 - Federally choices are many such as CQ, Politico Pro, Gallery Watch, etc.

OSU Daily News Digest is an email that provides headlines from all major traditional media outlets relevant to higher education. OSU Office of Government Affairs also provides a “Week in Review” for Senior Management members and others.




THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL,
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES





How County Extension Employees Fit into the Picture (State and Federal Government)

- 
- OSU has a campus wide team of Government Affairs professionals, many of whom are registered lobbyists
 - Nothing we do in FAES is only important to us. Nothing you do in your county is only important locally
 - Managing the process to obtain the best outcome for OSU Extension and the university requires constant communication
 - We count on you to keep us informed about your activities with public officials, in Ohio Gwen Wolford is your point of contact. In other states it is likely the Dean/Extension Director
 - Legislative Ethics Laws




THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL,
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES





How County Extension Employees Fit into the Picture (Local Government)

- 
- You have much greater ability to influence the policy process here but it is recommended that you do so while in communication with your Regional Director and Office of Government Affairs.



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL,
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES



Lobbying vs. Advocating vs. Educating

- As an Extension educator your role is to educate
- Your volunteers should be your advocates
- Lobbying is limited to people who are specifically designated by OSU and registered with the State of Ohio and/or federal government
- Lobbying includes a great deal of education and advocacy but the difference is lobbyists ask the public official to take specific actions on behalf of the organization they represent



Murphy's Laws of Lobbying

by Bill Costello

- In the legislature, logic is your weakest argument
- The importance of a hearing varies inversely with the importance of the bill
- The purpose of a study rarely is to find out anything
- Don't forget: When you get up to dance with a gorilla, you don't sit down until the gorilla gets tired
- Trying to get a legislator's attention is like trying to argue to a jury that's wandering around Disneyland
- Lobbyists thrive on panic and confusion – and these have been very good years

Source: Columbus Dispatch, a long time ago



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL,
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES



Knowing the People

- **Gatekeepers** — Does the public official have a secretary, an administrative assistant or an aide? Get to know them
- **Getting an appointment** – know who schedules for them
- **Administrator/ Budget Staff** — Don't just show up at budget time
- **Department Heads** — Develop a good personal relationship with at least one department head



Knowing the People

Learn as much as you can about the key person or organization before you meet or communicate

Business/Profession • Prior Jobs/Elected Positions • Family & Family History • Children • Grandchildren • Education • Religion
• Service Clubs • Hobbies • Other Interests

Check Organizational Web Sites • Google • Social Media

Find issue or cause the person is “passionate” about



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL,
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES



Knowing the People

- **Cultivate Influential & Supportive Clientele** — Find out who commissioners are close to politically and socially and if qualified and interested put them on advisory committees
- **Become Involved in Non-Work Community Activities** — Don't just make it all work related all the time. Become involved in a community organization or club and take on a project and be known in the club or committee. And make it known that you are involved. It would not hurt to be involved in a club where one of the commissioners or other county official is a member.



Communication Strategies

- Credibility of you as an individual and the organization are key: it doesn't matter how much you know unless they consider you a trustworthy and reliable source.
- Position yourself as a resource.
- Don't hesitate to work with staff.
- No Extension jargon or acronyms.
- Be respectful of time constraints, never ask for more than 30 min (less is better)
- Don't assume they will know what is second nature to you



Communication Strategies

The organizational culture of a public official's world is radically different from Extension's

Schedules

Priorities

Constant Change

Relationships must be built over time – Do you know them, do they know you?



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL,
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES



Communication Strategies

The four B's for dealing with elected officials & staff

Be factual

Be flexible

Be honest

but

Be relentless



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL,
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES



Communication Strategies

The official or staff person will be thinking:
Why are you here? What do you want?

Be prepared to concisely & specifically ask for what you want – this is what we call “the ask”

If possible tailor the message around an issue the key person is “passionate” about and stay within the parameters of your employer



Communication Methods and Tools

- Face to Face Grass Roots Supporters
- Involvement in Events/Educational Opportunities
- Phone E-mail Direct mail/printed material
- Fax Text Messages Social Media
- Weekly News Columns/Radio Shows/Newsletters
- Letters to the Editor Photo Opportunities
- Advertising and other Marketing Methods



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL,
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES



Other Considerations

- All printed materials should be brief
- Don't try and communicate everything about Extension at once
- Consistent contact is critical to build relationships
- Appeal to head and heart – data and stories
- It is much easier to cut the budget of someone on a piece of paper than a person who is known and respected
- Developing and sustaining strong relationships with public officials is everyone's job





The Less Public Parts of the Public Policy Process

- 
- Money and Influence
 - Official and unofficial advisors
 - Administration and Legislative branch policy priorities
 - Legislative Services Commission
 - Caucuses and caucus staff
 - Foreseen and unforeseen consequences of policy; trade-offs
 - Votes matter, but
 - Local media, social media
 - Think tanks, organizations



References

- Policy, Public Policy. Retrieved from Dictionary.com
- What is Public Policy, Center for Civic Education. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.civiced.org/pc-program/instructional-component/public-policy>
- -Tips for Working With Elected and Appointed Officials. (n.d.). Retrieved from [http://www.uwex.edu/ces/employeeresources/value/documents/Working with Elected and Appointed Officials.pdf](http://www.uwex.edu/ces/employeeresources/value/documents/Working%20with%20Elected%20and%20Appointed%20Officials.pdf)
- - Wolford, Gwen H. (2006). Keep the Money Coming unpublished presentation, PILD Conference
- - Wolford, Gwen H. (2011). Panel Discussion on Effective Communications with Elected Officials, unpublished presentation, ESP National Conference

