Building Coalitions To Preserve The Safety Net

June 2012
Polarized Political Environment

• The current political environment is highly polarized.
• Rise of the Tea Party, Occupy Wall Street Movement, and a divided Congress.
• Unlikely to see any real progress on any legislation until after the November election.
• There is an anti-spending mentality in Washington – everything is being scrutinized.
The November Elections

• Obama/Romney will be the most expensive Presidential election in history.

• Control of the Senate in play—Democrats have to defend more seats than Republicans.

• Tea Party freshman who won in 2010 will have to defend their record.

• The rise of Super PACs provides uncertainty on what the outcome will be.

• All of these factors will play a role on how the government is funded after the November election.

U.S. Senate

53 Democrats

47 Republicans

33 up for election

23 Democrats, 10 Republicans
# Grassroots Coalitions v. Advocacy Coalitions

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<th>“GRASSROOTS”</th>
<th>VS.</th>
<th>ADVOCACY PROGRAM</th>
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**Grassroots Characteristics**

- Big Blast
- At Crisis Moments
- Canned Messages
- Transactional
- Static Model
- Limited Audience
- Single Channel

**Advocacy Program Characteristics**

- Sustained Interaction
- Ongoing
- Content Matching Individuals and Values
- Relationship-Based
- Knowledge Building
- Broader Community
- Multi-Channel
Elements of a Successful Coalition

• Provide your coalition with a Digital Hub that is the public face of the coalition.

• Enhance the branding by promoting the coalition in local communities, media opportunities and online.

• **Recruit and sustain** coalition supporters that provide the mass of the coalition—keep them engaged, updated and provide opportunities for them to advocate alongside the coalition.

• **Empower** the core membership of the coalition to participate in advocacy activities—make it easy—and provide tools, opportunities, and ideas for them.
  
  – Core members and supporters will run the coalition if they are empowered and know they have the support to participate in advocacy.

• **Diversify** the coalition—a coalition is like a community—various voices, with differing opinions—who at the end of the day band together for the common cause.

• Keep coalition members and supporters **engaged** during downtime periods when there is little to no legislative action.
A Coalition Model to Yield Success

Engage  Educate  Ask  Reward
How to Have the Most Impact

**The ultimate goals of a coalition should be...**

- To impact policymakers by providing them with the information on why your issue/legislation is important.
- Be seen as a pillar of community working to help others in need of assistance.

**Champions...**

- Are highly **committed** to your issue
- Have a compelling **personal story**
- Are willing and eager to get **more involved**

Diagram:

- **Contacts**
  - **Advocates**
  - **Champions**
  - **Hill Visits**
  - **Press Conference**
  - **Video Testimonials**
  - **Town Hall Participant**
  - **Earned Media**
  - **Social Media**
  - **Letter to the Editor**
  - **Personal Letter**
  - **Phone Call**
  - **Email**
Impact of Advocacy in the Current Political Environment

Influence of Advocacy Communications on Legislators

- In-person meetings
- Individualized letters
- Individualized emails
- Phone calls
- Form letters
- Form emails

Source: Congressional Management Foundation
Goals and Objectives of the Coalition

• Increase awareness and build support for sustained funding for programs like LIHEAP and other weatherization programs.

• Build *loyalty* with CTKMW members, supporters and decision makers – monthly meetings to share/coordinate activities, key messages and commitments.

• Continue to elevate CTKMW as the leading voice advocating for energy assistance in Michigan.

• Educate the Michigan delegation on the need to maintain an adequate level of funding for LIHEAP.

• Engage in state level efforts on energy assistance process reform and funding security.
## CTKMW Highlights

### Key Activities
- Launched a redesigned website and a new online communications platform at [www.coalitiontokeepmichiganwarm.com](http://www.coalitiontokeepmichiganwarm.com)
- Re-mobilized the coalition members with a high level of engagement
- Led member outreach initiatives to enroll new coalition supporters
- Organized focused “calls to action” e-mail and letter campaign to legislators
- Engaged in media outreach and communication
- Hosted key events

### 2011 Highlights
- 19 press releases issued.
- 126 individuals sent 419 e-mails to 17 elected officials
- 32 individuals sent 66 “Thank you” e-mails to Senators Stabenow and Levin
- 87 individuals sent 176 emails to 86 MI legislators on LIEEF (state funding).
- 10 grassroots e-mails sent since LIHEAP Action Day
- 899 Facebook likes (room for improvement)
- 69 Followers on Twitter (room for improvement)

### 2012 Advocacy Impact
- Launched coalition blog and calendar on the website and email newsletter
- Led a MI Legislative Action Day – Lansing
- Met with & advised Governor’s office on level of need
- Participated in NFFN’s LIHEAP Action Day
- Provided testimony in MI Public Service Commission’s public hearing on LIHEAP
How Do We Build Loyalty in the CTKMW Community?

• Appealed to member’s and supporter’s values when communicating to them
• Gave an opportunity to tell their story
• Built upon current messaging strategy – new media (blog, video, newsletter)
• Grew & sustained membership involvement
• Grew & sustained supporter involvement
• Grew loyalty among both federal & state lawmakers and decision makers for long-term acknowledgement of need & support for energy assistance programs, process reform & future funding
CTKMW’s Efforts To Sustain Members During Lulls

• Launched a twice-a-month newsletter for members and supporters.
• Launched a blog to highlight activities and efforts of coalition members in their communities.
• Pro-actively participated in earned media activities to keep the issue fresh in the mind of the public and lawmakers.
• Continue to enhance the Coalition’s branding on social media.
• Continue to recruit, sustain and grow membership and supporters.

Conclusion: Quick website DEMO
www.coalitiontokeepmichiganwarm.com

Questions or comments
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Purpose

To increase public awareness of low-income energy issues and develop and implement strategies that address these issues through a collaboration of consumers, utilities, service providers and government agencies.
Goals of the Coalition

• Create a network of energy assistance advocates.
• Promote low-income energy assistance initiatives throughout the state
• Advocate for adequate state and federal energy assistance funding for low-income people
• Pursue alternative energy assistance solutions for a changing social and economic environment
• Represent the state to the National Fuel Fund Network and other organizations which have similar goals and interests
Example 3

History

• Founded in 1987
• Founding members include Sister Pat Kelly
• Membership includes, Non Profits, Utilities, State Officials, and concerned citizens
• Meets monthly or bi-monthly in the State Capital since its inception
• Has been a model for other state-wide coalitions, through NFFN
• Current Co-Chairs Alicia Redes, KCPL; and Todd Steinmann, OACAC
Mission

The goal mission of CKMW is to bring together all parties interested in seeking solutions to the problems faced by low-income and fixed-income Missouri consumers who are unable to afford the energy necessary to heat their homes (or to cool their homes, if medically necessary).

Goals

• To bring together Missourians with similar concerns for low-income
• Advocate for Federal, State and Local funding for utility and Weatherization funding
• To seek new sources of funding for utility assistance and weatherization
• To research and investigate the energy needs of low-income Missourians and disseminate information
CKMW Accomplishments

• Increased state-wide support for LIHEAP
• Improved relationships between utilities, state, and nonprofits
• Achieved “Utilicare” legislation – state funded Utility and weatherization legislation
• Increased fuel funds in Missouri
• Cold Weather Rule and revision through PSC
• Participated in Governors Energy Policy Council
• Held successful state-wide conferences