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# **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

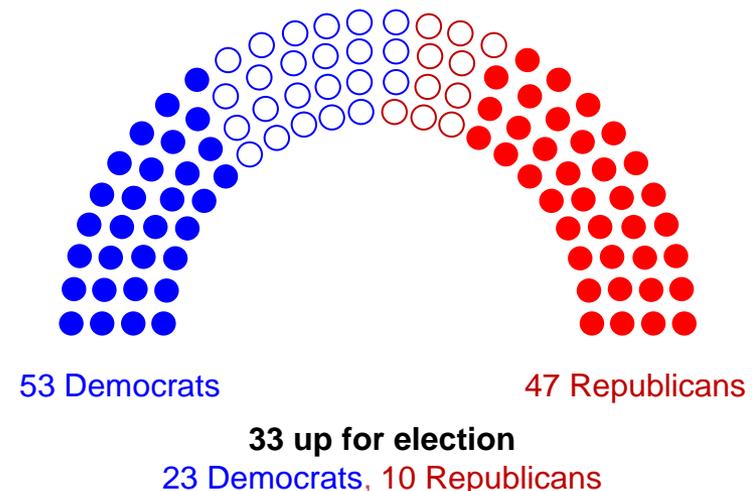


# The November Elections

- 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



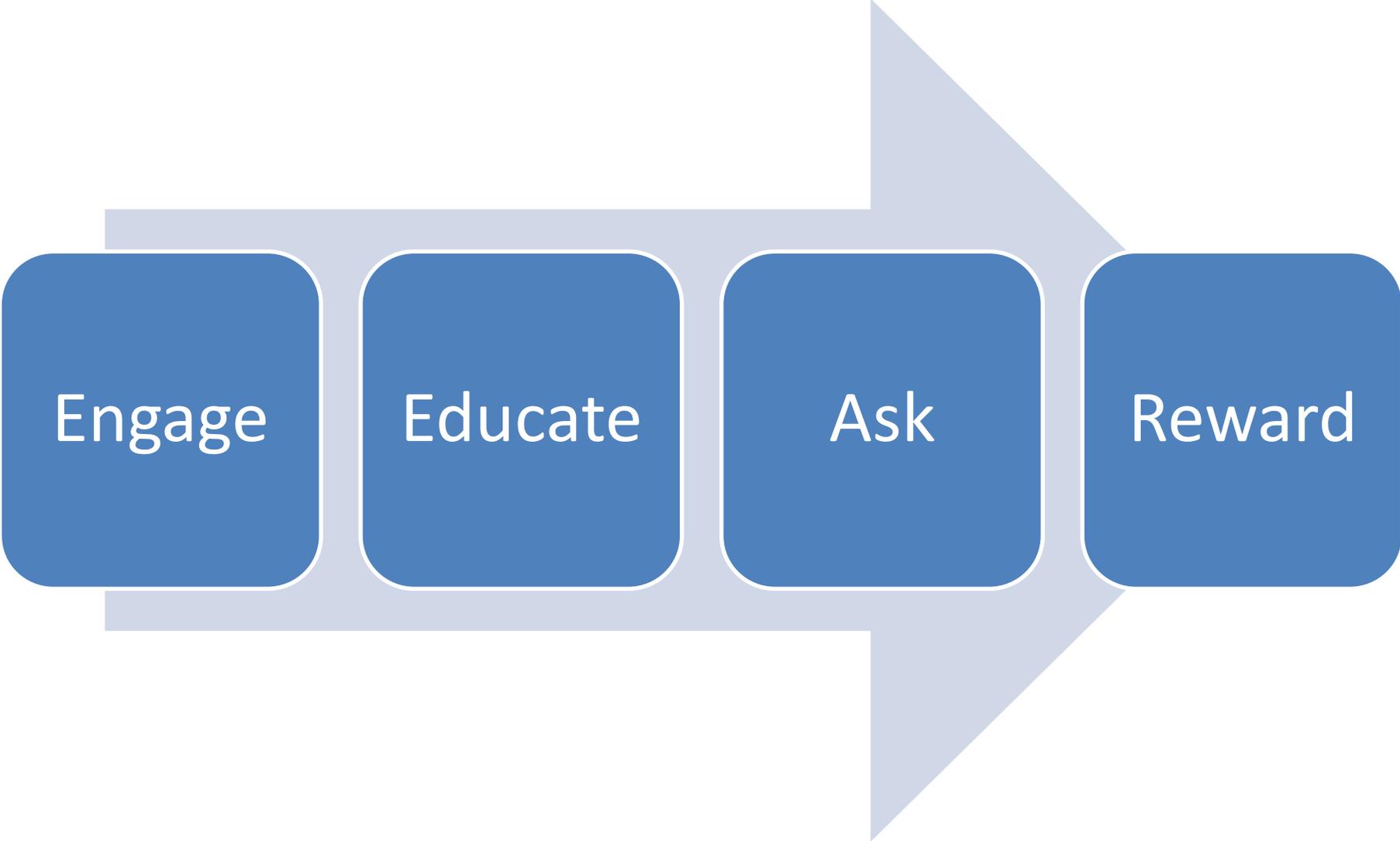
# Grassroots Coalitions v. Advocacy Coalitions

"GRASSROOTS"	VS.	ADVOCACY PROGRAM
Big Blast	◀ ▶	Sustained Interaction
At Crisis Moments	◀ ▶	Ongoing
Canned Messages	◀ ▶	Content Matching Individuals and Values
Transactional	◀ ▶	Relationship-Based
Static Model	◀ ▶	Knowledge Building
Limited Audience	◀ ▶	Broader Community
Single Channel	◀ ▶	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 to 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



# 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.

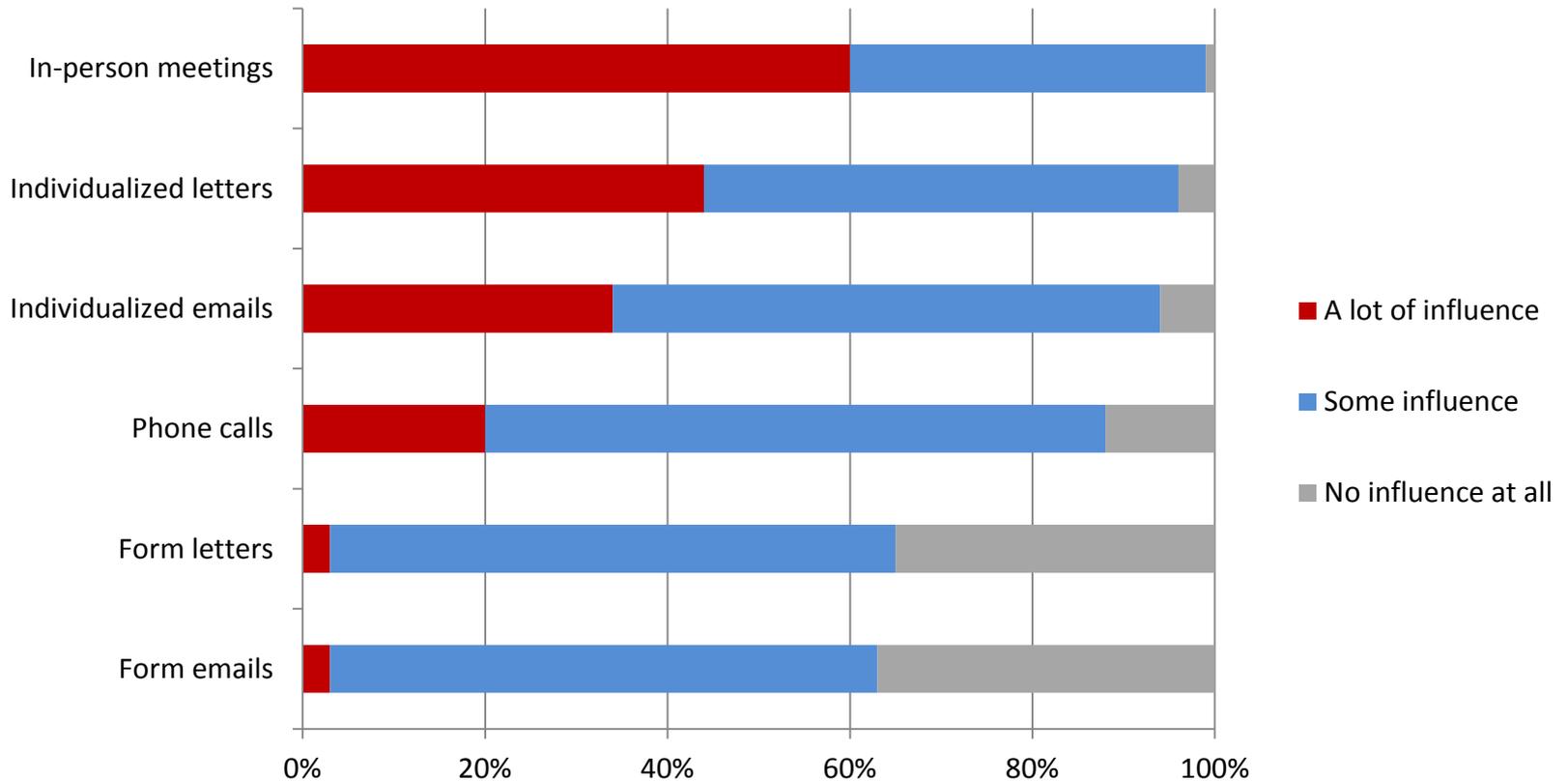
## *Champions...*

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



# Impact of Advocacy in the Current Political Environment

## Influence of Advocacy Communications on Legislators



Source: Congressional Management Foundation

# Example 1



## 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.



## 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?



COALITION  
to keep  
MICHIGAN WARM

- 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](http://www.coalitiontokeepmichiganwarm.com)

### Questions or comments

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## Example 2



### **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

# CKMW Mission and Goals



## 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