

Making an issue of it: The Campaign Handbook

Campaigning on an issue, like campaigning for public office, is a communications process with a political goal—winning votes. In a legislative campaign, however, the focus of your efforts is more on the legislators who must vote your legislation into law than on the voting public.

Like an election campaign, a legislative campaign is a group effort demanding good organization and a large and willing work force. There aren't many legislators who will propose or vote for a law that they believe will be bad for voters or that their constituents would not support. The job of a campaign, then, is to demonstrate that the legislation you back is good for citizens and that support from constituents exists.

Whatever your goal—cleaner air, an end to discrimination in employment, improved housing, school finance reform—the moment will come when you must decide whether a legislative campaign is the best way to reach that goal. Your organization needs to ask itself if it can marshal the commitment, the resources and the know-how to convince public officials that legislative action is necessary.

Since many good causes fail because their supporters are unable to deal with the machinery of state, local or federal government, this campaign handbook is designed to help you organize your campaign so that you can deal effectively with potential snags, whether they are caused by the complexity of government or people's reluctance to get involved, and to help you win your fight. It has been written to address the complexities of a statewide legislative campaign, but is applicable in principle to a smaller target, such as a city council, as well. Regardless of where you intend to focus your efforts, the handbook can help you zero in on problems and resolve them before they get out of hand.

Building a coalition— why and how

Political coalitions exist on the state and local level in virtually every state where legislative action is pending. The reason is simple—few laws get passed through the action of a single citizen group.

Necessary as a coalition may be, it's important to remember that a coalition is not a marriage for life. It is really an ad hoc, "sometime" thing. Its strength is the strength of the individuals and organizations that are affiliated; it does not, in reality, have an identity of its own. Its function is to serve as a focal point, a clearinghouse and a coordinator; to make sure that participating organizations and other groups are doing all they can and what they are best able to do, to achieve a desired result.

Although a coalition may carry out agreed-upon activities—e.g. fundraising, public relations, oversight on local organization and lobbying efforts—it is not a substitute for commitment and action from member groups. In short, being represented in a coalition does not mean that an organization has done its bit and can sit back and "let the coalition do it."

A coalition's first task is to define why its goal is important—why legislation is necessary. The reason behind the goal will be important not only to convince legislators and the public but in soliciting campaign funds and volunteer efforts as well. The *why* should become a theme that permeates all campaign activities.

There are, of course, varying degrees of coalition participation, a fact that is readily apparent as the number of organizations lined up behind the legislative goal expands. Some organizations, for example, may not have a grassroots constituency that can be mobilized for local legislative district letterwriting or public relations efforts. That same group may, however, have a crackerjack lobbyist at the state capitol who can put some time and effort into the campaign.

All participating groups should be encouraged to speak out in their own names, as well as under the coalition umbrella, in support of the goal. Obviously, the president of a state or local League of Women Voters has a higher recognition factor and carries more clout than does the chairperson of a newly formed, amorphous body with a name unfamiliar to the public. The mushrooming of special "committees" or "coalitions" during any election or legislative campaign is, by now, a fairly familiar phenomenon to both citizens and legislators. Very rarely do they swing much weight or many votes on their own. What counts are the joint efforts of each of the parties that have lent their name and support to the common goal.

Following are some general guidelines for working within a coalition.

Who should belong?

Ask *organizations and opinion leaders* who have, or should have, an interest in the legislation to participate. Contact state and local counterparts of national endorsers, but don't ignore a local organization just because its national affiliate has not endorsed. Similarly, do not ignore organizations or individuals merely because you disagree on other issues: *a coalition is formed for one purpose—to secure legislation.* All other agreements or disagreements can and should take a back seat. Once the prime goal is achieved, the members of the coalition go their own ways (though you may have found interesting new allies on other fronts).

When the constituency of the state or district in which the legislation is pending is predominantly rural, seek membership among organizations and leaders whose constituency is

rural: home economics associations, visiting nurse associations, farm groups, church leadership.

Go after the organizations that have the greatest influence on your state or city legislative body. If they won't join, seek individual endorsements or behind-the-scenes backing. Sometimes powerful people are willing to help but unwilling to have it known publicly that they are doing so.

Some rules of the game

Make sure that everyone who joins the coalition—group or individual—understands and agrees to the rules of the game:

- The legislative goal should be clearly defined and stated; no one is empowered to speak for the coalition on any other issue.
- Each organization is free to act for itself, outside the coalition, but not in the name of the coalition except with appropriate authorization from other members. What is required for authorization should be delineated.
- The coalition will work best if its tasks are clearly defined and assigned. Decisions will be made by those empowered by the coalition members to do so. Probably a coordinating committee will be set up to coordinate the work of other committees, which are in turn responsible for specific functions within the coalition.
- Agree on the necessary and appropriate elements of a campaign. Assign responsibilities. If everyone can agree from the beginning that success is more important than individual or organizational prestige, later conflicts will be minimized (though seldom eliminated). In this kind of positive climate, tasks can be assigned to the individuals and organizations best able to perform them.
- Fundraising is necessary to both the largest and smallest campaigns. Who's paying for it—whether it is campaign literature, radio spots, or stamps and envelopes—is a question that even an all-volunteer campaign must face early in the campaign and be prepared to answer. Since money will be needed, determine a policy for fundraising and a tentative budget and try to stick to it. Money is the root of all evil only if you don't confront this issue right at the start.
- Decide how to maintain communication among member organizations—regular meetings? (schedule? place?) newsletters? telephone? etc.

It's one thing to list a number of parts that go into the makings of a successful coalition; it's quite another to achieve a well-coordinated, smooth-running coalition effort. Give-and-take is an integral part of coalition work. Every individual and every organization in a coalition has an identity (and probably an ego) of its own. It's important to keep in mind that organizations working in the coalition have different *raison d'être* and assign different values to the fight. Groups may differ on priorities, strategies, and/or tactics, and these differences can and do produce internal conflicts. Some groups are more successful in getting to the media. Is theirs the image that best serves the coalition's purpose? There can also be differences of opinion on when and how to lobby legislators—one group will want to push hard and early; another will favor a more passive, behind-the-scenes approach. "Activist" groups may devote more of their energies to the goal than do other coalition members and consequently get a larger share of the spotlight. Reconciling these differences can get sticky. The task requires patience, tact, and the willingness to understand the reasons behind a group's advocacy of a particular approach.

There's no sure cure for settling internal organizational problems. However, solutions are more likely to be found if you have the pertinent facts at hand and are able to demonstrate conclusively the potential damage or advantage of a course of action. One of the main functions of a coalition is to gather and share intelligence and help all participants gain a clear understanding of political realities. The business of your coalition is the passage of particular legislation and, while it may not be the top priority for all member groups, coalition membership should be taken as a commitment to work for passage with maximum effort and efficiency.

If your coalition is effective, it should produce these results:

- Lobbyists know whom to talk to on what issues.
- Legislative attitudes are reported (particularly changes), and proper action results.
- Communications go to the right people in the right districts on the right issues at the right time.
- Visibility is promoted by a unified, cooperative campaign.
- Proponents *act* instead of reacting.
- The opposition is pinpointed and out-manuevered.
- Everyone who wants to work has something useful to do.
- People and organizations with specific talents can use them most effectively.
- With constant interaction among committees (via task forces), no effort is wasted and action is directed effectively.

And "with a little bit of luck" it *should* also get that legislation passed.

Functions of a coordinating committee

To make daily decisions and determine common strategy and tactics, form a coordinating committee (by that or any other name). Occasionally, the coordinating committee for a coalition's legislative action campaign has a *geographical* base: officers plus a coordinator for each legislative district. More often, it is *task-oriented*: officers plus a chairman for each major kind of responsibility. The second structure is represented in the sample table of organization below.

However you organize them, certain jobs have to get done, and a chairman must be assigned to carry out each major function. Where possible and appropriate, these functions, which are outlined below in terms of a state coalition, should be replicated at the local level.

Also, regular two-way communication must go on among the coordinating committee, district and local coordinators, and members of the coalition.

Five major committees (task forces) and their functions

Field Service (Operations)

Find coordinators in every legislative district.

Provide substantive information to district coordinators along with give-away material.

Provide "how-to" information (how to organize at the local level; how to get endorsers; how to set up speakers' bureaus; how to conduct a petition, letterwriting, or letters-to-editor campaign, etc.).

Keep district coordinators informed about political picture and strategy, scheduling, headcounts, where and what kind of pressure is needed.

Provide field visits and/or speakers from state coalition as needed.

Finance

Develop a budget.

Plan fundraising activities: benefits (parties? speaking engagements?); direct mail, etc.

Plan personal solicitations of individuals and groups.

Resource or Research

Monitor opposition literature, speeches, etc.

Research answers to opposition *plus* positive arguments pertinent locally.

Research facts on the legislation and its impact. Provide fact sheets in simple, direct language to be used:

- ☐ by district workers;
- ☐ in news articles and releases, radio or TV programs;
- ☐ in flyers for public distribution;
- ☐ for briefing lobbyists and individuals who are answering or anticipating opposition publicly;
- ☐ in internal newsletters and bulletins for members of coalition organization;
- ☐ by legislators in committee or on the floor.

Know who supporters are.

Serve as clearinghouse for all information on the legislation.

Public Relations

Develop material (with Resource Committee) for public distribution, (e.g. flyers, one-page fact sheets, logo, slogan).

Develop newsletter for workers to keep enthusiasm up, exchange good campaign ideas.

Set up clipping service, by district, to monitor press, pro and con.

Analyze positions of all relevant newspapers, TV and radio stations and get names of sympathetic reporters, publishers, producers; use them for advice and help in getting the proponents' story across.

Work on those elements of the media that are unsympathetic.

Analyze the power structure (ethnic, political, geographic, etc.); determine which segments of the population listen to whom.

Disseminate public information on substance, hearings and votes through news releases and stories; prepare sample news releases and stories for use by local organizations.

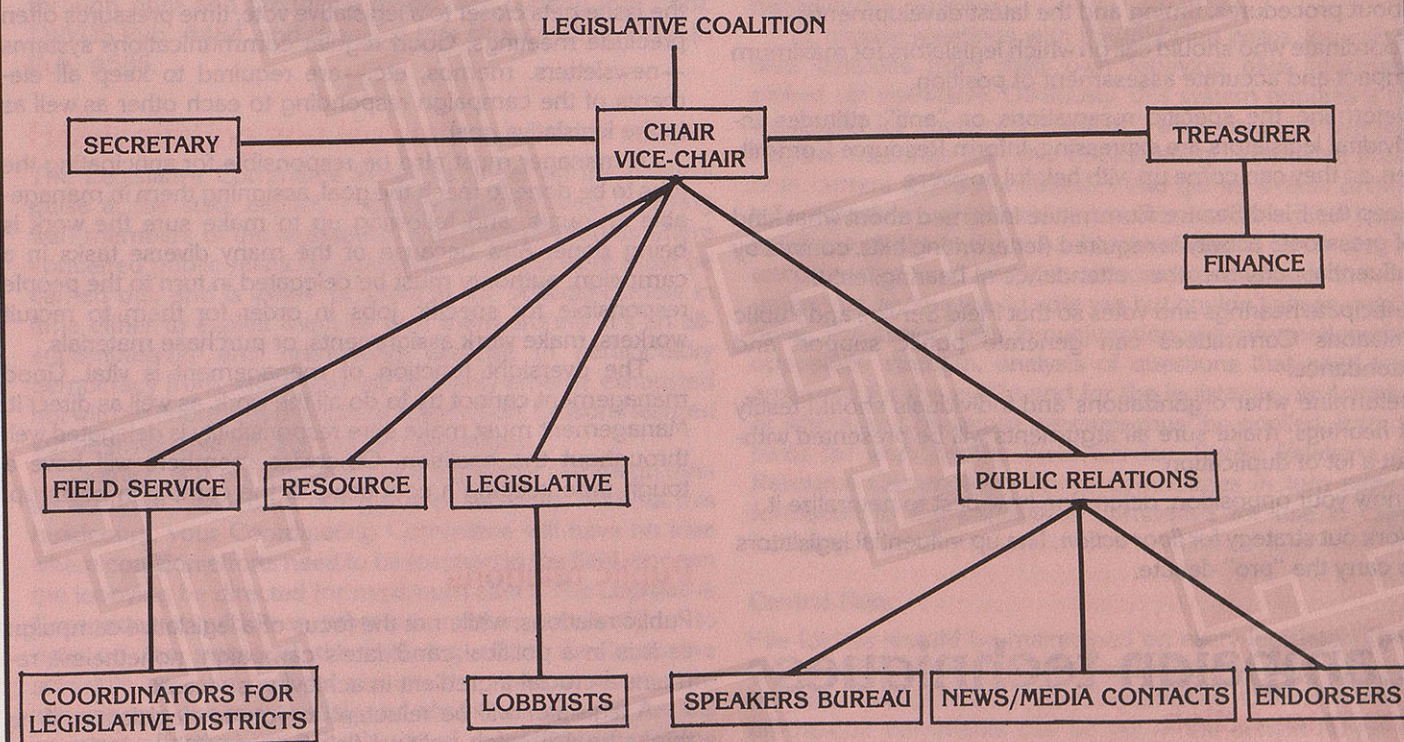
Set up TV and/or radio interviews or debates (in cooperation with Speakers' Bureau).

As budget permits, develop radio and TV spots and newspaper ads.

Endorsers—subcommittee to PR Committee.

- ☐ Line up statewide endorsements for release at appropriate time.

ONE WAY TO ORGANIZE YOUR COORDINATING COMMITTEE



- ate time, including prominent party leaders.
- ☐ Cooperate with district coordinators in lining up local endorsers, particularly in districts of crucial or swing votes.
 - ☐ Keep building participating membership in coalition.
 - ☐ Have someone specifically responsible for effort to recruit endorsements from a wide cross-section of key organizations and politically influential people.

Speakers' Bureau—subcommittee to PR Committee.

- ☐ Set up statewide bureau, get consent of all speakers, their availability schedules, how much reimbursement they'll need, etc.
- ☐ Train speakers as necessary. Provide sample speeches in simple, direct language (with help of Resource Committee). Include as part of training an interrogation session with the nasty questions raised by the opposition.
- ☐ Solicit speaking engagements at meetings, debates, radio, TV programs (with help of Public Relations Committee).
- ☐ Schedule speakers; coordinate with Field Service Committee for requests from local or district level.

Legislative

Set up and train a corps of lobbyists (easily accessible to the state capitol).

Maintain a regularly updated headcount (i.e., who is definitely for, who is opposed, who is uncommitted); doublecheck the accuracy from as many sources as possible (without alienating your supporters).

Know who in the party leadership is with you: maintain regular contact so that you are fully informed and up to date about procedures, timing and the latest developments.

Coordinate who should call on which legislators for maximum impact and accurate assessment of position.

Determine the specific reservations or "anti" attitudes individual legislators are expressing. Inform Resource Committee, so they can come up with helpful answers.

Keep the Field Service Committee informed about what kind of grassroots activity is required (letterwriting blitz, contact by influential party member, attendance at hearing, etc.).

Anticipate hearings and votes so that Field Service and Public Relations Committees can generate public support and attendance.

Determine what organizations and individuals should testify at hearings; make sure all arguments will be presented without a lot of duplication.

Know your opposition: determine how best to neutralize it.

Work out strategy for floor action; line up influential legislators to carry the "pro" debate.

Campaign techniques

Ready for action

A legislative campaign has a goal with a deadline—the vote—just as a candidate's campaign ends on election day. Now that you know what your coalition committees must do, it's crucial to decide how and when they should go into action to meet the deadline. Three ingredients are essential to a suc-

cessful campaign: good management, defined committee tasks, and a countdown calendar.

Campaign management

The campaign must have a manager to make sure that the diverse elements in the campaign are functioning effectively and in unison. While it is possible to conduct a successful campaign without having a paid campaign manager (the League of Women Voters has been doing it for years), it is impossible to meet campaign deadlines without good management.

Management must be appointed to set practical working goals for the campaign: how many volunteers, how many dollars, etc., are necessary (in January? in February?) to meet the schedule. And, as in a business where a regular profit and loss statement is an essential tool for analyzing whether goals are being reached, management must also plan periodic checks on how the campaign is going. Management must be willing to reconsider a particular strategy that proves not to be working, revise a schedule that has fallen behind, or decide if an interim goal is unrealistically ambitious and needs changing or is essential and requires redoubled effort.

Management also has the responsibility of coordinating all elements of the campaign in a way that makes sense. If there is no manager, however, this kind of thinking falls to coordinating committee or task force chairman. For instance, it is important that the public relations chairman be aware of the positive impact that good PR will have on fundraising and on recruiting field workers.

Effective campaign management also includes good communications among all elements of the campaign. As the issue gets closer to a legislative vote, time pressures often preclude meetings. Good regular communications systems—newsletters, memos, etc.—are required to keep all elements of the campaign responding to each other as well as to the legislative goal.

A manager must also be responsible for anticipating the jobs to be done to reach the goal, assigning them in manageable amounts, and following up to make sure the work is being done. And because of the many diverse tasks in a campaign, authority must be delegated in turn to the people responsible for specific jobs in order for them to recruit workers, make work assignments, or purchase materials.

The oversight function of management is vital. Good management cannot try to do all the work, as well as direct it. Management must make sure responsibility is delegated well throughout the coalition. Otherwise members will have a tough time keeping a cool head as the campaign heats up.

Public relations

Public relations, while not the focus of a legislative campaign as it is in a political candidate's campaign, nonetheless remains a crucial ingredient in achieving success.

A legislator will be reluctant to vote for legislation, if he thinks he will catch political flak from constituents for supporting it. Consequently, a vigorous public campaign on behalf of your legislative goal can be of invaluable assistance in gaining a legislator's vote.

Your first and most essential PR task is to identify the issue. It is not enough simply to state your goal. You must

also tell the media and, through the media, the public *why* the goal is important.

The best indication that you know why the goal is important is that you can describe the goal briefly. When you can strip the issue down to bare facts, remove verbiage and confusing side issues, and succinctly explain why this legislation should be passed, you have added the ingredient basic to any successful campaign—the theme.

The theme is the tie that binds. It must be stated and restated throughout the campaign. It is your way of sticking to the issue and will help you avoid becoming sidetracked by issues raised by the opposition.

Having a working theme also enables controversy to work for you. Your comments on breaking news in a news release or a letter to the editor can effectively tie current issues to your legislative goal. Any hot issue that allows you once again to restate your theme can enhance your chances of success.

Tying your campaign in with other interests is also important, because different segments of the public will respond differently to your legislative goal. Parents of elementary school children may be for a school budget increase while senior citizens may oppose it. Commuting drivers may support a highway construction program that may be opposed by environmentalists. While opposition will exist on almost any piece of legislation, decreasing the opposition among the public is an essential function of PR.

As with the legislature, it is important that the resource or research committee identify opposing groups and that efforts to convince them be targeted at their particular interests. In this regard, it is not enough to tell the public why the legislation is important to you. It is also necessary to identify and communicate what's in it for them.

For practical information on how to reach the public through print and broadcast media, see *Getting Into Print*, LWVUS Pub. #484, and *Breaking Into Broadcasting*, LWVUS Pub. #586.

Headcounting and legislative coordination

The Legislative Committee keeps its finger on the political pulse at the state capitol. It carries out the direct lobbying with members of the legislature, anticipates the areas where concerted public relations, research, and field work must be carried out, and is aware of shifts in the political climate in time either to exploit them or turn them around. It's an all-encompassing and fascinating exercise in participatory democracy from which you will probably emerge exhausted but with an enormous amount of satisfaction. Lessons learned will be invaluable in other action campaigns.

Nothing is more important to a legislative campaign than an accurate headcount of legislators' attitudes. Without this headcount, your Coordinating Committee will have no idea where coalition efforts need to be focused in the field, nor can the lobbying be directed for maximum effect. The Legislative Committee should keep other committees constantly up to date on the status of the lobbying effort, the legislative schedule and the political picture, the districts where constituent pressure is essential (and what kinds of pressures will be most effective), and the kinds of substantive questions that must be researched. Information from the other committees must in turn be shared with the lobbyists and will enter into the Legislative Committee's determination of how to make lobbying assignments (see Lobbying).

Setting up and using the legislative files

The Legislative Committee should maintain a central file somewhere in the capital city, preferably within walking distance of the state capitol, where it is easily accessible to the lobbyists. There are a number of ways to set up legislative files; the one suggested below can be adapted to your needs.

The working card file

The names of all legislators can be entered on 3 x 5 cards with minimal information including office address and phone, party, any past votes on similar or related legislation, sponsor of resolution, when and how often contacted in this session; comments. The cards can be color-coded: one color for supporters, one color for opponents and one color for uncommitted.

The cards can be handed out to lobbyists (keeping a central tabulation as to which lobbyist has which cards) to be used while they are lobbying **and returned to central headquarters with comments added or attached.**

The lobbying chairman (or an assistant good at detail, accuracy and interpretation), by keeping the color coding up to date in response to lobbyists' reports, will have a quick general view of how the campaign is going. When special effort is to be directed to holding on to proponents, for instance, all those cards can be easily pulled and assigned.

Worksheets

Worksheets listing all legislators either by district, by party or otherwise (depending on how lobbying assignments have been made) should be prepared. Opposite the names of each legislator, blank spaces can be ruled off to check his or her current attitude on a scale of 1 to 5: 1 = supports; 2 = leans favorable; 3 = neutral or uncommitted; 4 = leans negative; 5 = opposes.

At regular meetings with the lobbying corps, you can update attitudes from their own lobbying plus information picked up elsewhere. Obviously, this system requires a new worksheet for each new "reading" after visiting a legislator. Regular meetings with the Coordinating Committee should note current legislative attitudes and get an overall *accurate* tally based on all possible contacts and analyses (e.g., a legislator might have told a League lobbyist he or she was uncommitted and told the secretary-treasurer of the local union that he/she would vote yes but couldn't say so publicly now). The current tally, in conjunction with information about opposition strength, analysis of questions that need to be answered for the public and for the legislature, and analysis of where and by whom pressure must be applied, form the basis for work by the Field Service, Public Relations and Resource Committees. These committees in turn relay information to the Legislative Committee for use in capitol lobbying.

Central Files

File folders should be maintained on every legislator. These files should *not* leave the office and should be accessible only to those authorized by the Coordinating Committee (e.g., off-the-cuff comments can be put in the central file for the information of lobbyists but should *not* be made public to the media or to unauthorized people who might exploit them).

The file folders should contain:

The legislator's name, district, party, home address and

phone, professional address and phone, legislative address and phone.

A picture if available (If a lobbyist doesn't know a legislator, it's nice to get an idea of what he or she looks like.).

How long legislator has been in the legislature and committees he/she is on; special legislative interests.

Education and professional background; marital status (Does a legislator have an influential spouse who is a member of an organization sympathetic to your goal and who should be contacted?).

Prior recorded votes on similar or related legislation.

Major media in legislator's own district: *their* position on your goal; who reads or listens to them.

Outside interests: organizations of which legislator is a member; organizations and individuals who can influence him or her.

Position in legislative power structure. There are obvious signs, such as being a member of a major committee or the committee which holds hearings on the legislation; less obvious are such facts as that he/she went to school with the Speaker, or informally but not officially represents the governor's views, or was deposed from a chairmanship by the current Speaker, etc.

Report sheets on which a schedule of contacts made (by whom, when, where and how) can be entered, as well as comments on legislator's attitude, his/her analysis of the political scene and any hints he/she has dropped regarding colleagues (which would also go in *their* files).

Some of this information will be available right away and should help in briefing the lobbyists. Some of it will accrue as more and better contacts are made with the legislator and his/her colleagues. The more you can put together, the better off you'll be when the vote is approaching and special resources must be used to line up those last few votes.

Coordinating the lobbying

The first job, of course, is to pick your lobbyists, brief them on the substance and politics of the issue and train them in lobbying techniques (see *Lobbying*).

Make every effort to keep your issue away from partisan politics. Votes are needed from both sides of the aisle. Nevertheless, it makes common sense to assign lobbyists to legislators where as much potential as possible exists for agreement; Democrats should lobby Democrats and Republicans should lobby Republicans. It should also be self-evident that legislators who, for instance, are known to be opposed to labor should not be assigned to union lobbyists and so on. The lobbyists should be sensitive to the personalities and biases of the legislators, not forgetting that a nonthreatening, quiet approach (both in appearance and attitude) is generally the most effective.

Whether or not an exact and felicitous match can be worked out at the start, a lobbyist should in every case have been working with a legislator constructively enough and long enough in advance of any vote to establish credibility, so that the lobbyist can feel reasonably sure of an accurate headcount. If you discover on the day the floor vote is taken that you have lost by ten votes when your lobbyists' reports led you to think you were going to win by one, it's too late to

recognize that the reports you were getting did not reflect the true picture.

The Legislative Committee is responsible for analyzing the lobbying reports, comparing them with reports received from the field and other sources, and determining how accurate the headcount is and how the political wind is blowing. The committee should know at all times who is seeing whom and should be prepared and *authorized* to make new lobbying assignments when any sign of inadequate or inaccurate reporting surfaces or when hostility has developed between a legislator and a lobbyist. If a vote took place in a prior session, the Legislative Committee should know how well the headcount agreed with the final vote. Any deficiencies in the headcount should be recognized and remedied early in the new session.

Lobbyists and others will be reporting on the individuals who should be enlisted to work on a particular legislator. They will also be reporting where constituent and/or organizational pressure should be applied. By keeping the Field Service and PR committees informed of these reports, committee resources can be used to reach the appropriate people. In addition, reports of which opposition arguments are penetrating the legislature should be referred to the Resource Committee and their answers made available to the lobbyists.

As a result of this constant oversight, reevaluation and communication, the Legislative Committee will be in a position to assure that **the right people are talking to the right legislators at the right time with the right facts**. These people will have established a relationship with the legislature so that an accurate headcount will be available before the vote. The committee should at the same time be able to anticipate political problems before they become potential disasters and rally all the coalition's resources into action.

Other legislative committee responsibilities

Establish rapport and keep in touch with the majority leadership and the committee chairman in order to:

- get an early warning about the hearing date (arrange a mutually convenient date, time and place if possible);
- assure cooperation in the scheduling of proponents at the hearing;
- get early information about the reporting date and the schedule for floor action;
- get advice on effective use of legislative procedures;
- line up leadership support.

Coordinate hearing testimony of the proponents to achieve greatest impact (see *Testifying*).

Find out who key committee members are; work with them.

A *strong minority report is essential*, if lobbying reports indicate an unfavorable report is forthcoming. Check committee members favorable to your goal to see if they want help in writing the minority report or additional factual material; have Resource Committee prepare.

Line up influential legislators to floor manage and/or participate in floor debate in favor of the legislation; find out who would welcome prepared remarks or additional factual material; have Resource Committee prepare.

Lobbying

The Legislative Committee formulates the overall strategy and tactics and assigns lobbyists to specific legislators. In these assignments the committee *must* take into account the organizational and party affiliation of the lobbyist. Though an occasional mismatch is inevitable, a lobbyist who encounters real legislative hostility should not pursue the matter but should report back to headquarters with as much information as possible about the reasons for the hostility and who should make the follow-up contact.

Lobbyists can be especially important in assessing the strength of support or opposition of legislators representing districts with little or no constituency from the coalition's member organizations. Particularly when legislative opposition is anticipated (or when supporters need shoring up), the lobbyist can help determine which district forces will be influential in swinging the vote. Then the Public Relations and Field Service Committees can work to line up these forces in favor of the legislation.

There is nothing more satisfying, nothing more fun, than direct person-to-person lobbying for an issue you really believe in. The frustrations can be great, but the knowledge gained about both overt and covert political actions and reactions, the relationships established with major and minor political decision makers, and the gratification of having personally participated in the political process far outweigh the frustrations. Win or lose, a stint as lobbyist will leave you better equipped to move effectively in the political arena when the opportunity arises again.

Lobbying is not a dirty word. Lobbyists perform an essential function in our democratic process. Lobbying a public official is no more or less than using persuasion to convince a person to vote your way. The person has been elected to represent the views of his or her constituents and expects to hear from them. Human nature being what it is, the individual will respond more favorably to those he or she knows and respects. Therefore a *first rule of lobbying* is not to threaten or antagonize those whom you are trying to influence. You do your cause more harm than good, possibly slamming the door on further discussion that might change the legislator's mind or even turning the person against you when he or she might have been favorably disposed to begin with. Furthermore, whatever the reasons for disagreement, threats or aggressively hostile behavior on your part can give political legitimacy to views that the legislator might not otherwise have seriously espoused.

The qualifications for a good lobbyist are:

- an intelligent command of the issue;
- a commitment to the cause, tempered by a tolerance for the human weaknesses of colleagues and elected public officials;
- enthusiasm and sincerity;
- a sense of humor, with a genuine liking of people and an ability to roll with the punches.

It is important to build rapport and understanding between the lobbyist and the legislator. Assuming a reasonably friendly relationship, legislators who are irrevocably committed either pro or con will usually tell you so quite candidly, *though you must listen carefully to what they say to be sure you're really hearing what they mean!* It is usually hardest to elicit an honest and accurate response from a legislator who claims to be neutral. Once mutual trust is established, how-

ever, the legislator will be more open in stating his position and the reasons for it, and the lobbyist will be able to make an accurate assessment of that position for headcount records.

Phone calls or organizational letters are less effective than personal visits, unless the legislator really knows who you are from prior contacts. The lobbyist who does not know the legislator should try to arrange to be introduced at the first visit by someone who does know him and has already established some credibility. After the first discussion, a lobbyist should make follow-up person-to-person visits periodically to present relevant factual material, discuss changes in the political picture or status of the legislation, or demonstrate support from influential endorsers (e.g., if the legislator usually votes with the Farm Bureau and its director has just come out in favor, the lobbyist should use this as a reason for a visit).

Some do's and don'ts for lobbyists

- DO:** recognize the legislator and the legislative staff as human beings; respect and *listen to* their views.
- DO:** get to know legislative staff and treat them courteously—their cooperation can make or break your chances to reach the legislators themselves.
- DO:** identify yourself immediately at each contact; public officials meet too many people to remember everyone.
- DO:** know the issue and the status of the legislation.
- DO:** know your legislator—past record on related legislation and/or votes; party and position in the legislative and political power structure; legislative and outside interests; how long he or she has been in the legislature; what kind of a personal interview will be most effective (sensitivity to legislative attitudes about appearance and approach is *essential*).
- DO:** be aware of any prior favorable commitment to your cause; enlist such a legislator to promote support among colleagues; ask his/her advice.
- DO:** commend legislators for actions you approve of, but don't feel as free to criticize.
- DO:** be brief with your appeal, then follow up periodically.
- DO:** give legislators succinct, easy-to-read literature with important facts and arguments highlighted.
- DO:** *keep off-the-record comments confidential.*
- DO:** keep the door open for further discussion even if legislator's attitude appears to be negative.
- DO:** report all contacts immediately to headcount headquarters so that appropriate district and capitol follow-up can be carried out.
- DON'T:** be arrogant, condescending or threatening.
- DON'T:** back recalcitrant legislators into a corner where they take a definite position against you.
- DON'T:** overwhelm legislators with too much written material, which they won't have time to read.
- DON'T:** make notes of a conversation while talking to a legislator.
- DON'T:** repeat off-the-record comments of one legislator to another.
- DON'T:** get into protracted arguments.

In addition to presenting arguments in favor of the legislation, the lobbyist is also on a fact-finding mission, intent on gleanings information for the central headcount files. Without

asking direct questions, a good lobbyist can pick up clues on points like these:

- What questions has the legislator raised that must be answered?
- Which fellow legislators' opinions does he or she most respect?
- Does he/she respond to party pressure?
- Which coalition organizations are most respected by the individual? Which ones generate the most hostility?
- What other organizations or individuals is the person likely to be responsive to? (e.g., church, service club, newspaper publisher, hometown mayor, etc.)
- What are his/her major legislative and nonlegislative interests? Are there individuals or organizations in these areas who might influence the person on the legislation in question?
- What does the legislator know about the political undercurrents affecting legislative positions of his/her constituents on your goal?
- If the person is friendly, does he/she have advice to offer? hints about how to work with other legislators?
- Is he or she influenced by rational arguments? by emotional appeals to human need and decency? by appeals from particular individuals or groups regardless of the emotional issues or facts?

Testifying

The major goal in testifying at a public hearing is to demonstrate to the committee, the media, and through the media to the public, that the proponents of the legislation know their facts, represent a broadbased constituency and can wield political clout. Good testimony and influential witnesses receiving good news coverage can serve to stimulate interest in the subject and overcome one of the weaknesses in many campaigns—namely, public apathy.

In many instances, the testimony presented at a legislative hearing has more effect on the people who read or hear about it than it does on the legislators themselves. To put it another way, as far as the legislative committee members are concerned, the lobbying you do with them before and after the hearing is more important than the hearing itself; nevertheless, it is essential that you present a case in the hearing that will give the public facts, attract public support and steer a course that takes account of political realities. Opponents must not be allowed by default to give the impression that support doesn't exist or to attract all the headlines.

A number of factors should be taken into account in determining who should testify:

- Will witnesses be more effective if they are from the districts of hearing committee members?
- Are there particular organizations and/or individuals who antagonize the legislators and thus should remain in the background?
- Which and how many witnesses will be needed to represent the largest cross-section of the voting population?
- Which witnesses have the greatest publicity potential?
- Which witnesses can best overcome the arguments of the opposition and respond to committee questions?
- Which organizations and/or individuals *must* be included?
- Who should represent each party in order to demonstrate bipartisan support?

- What limitations on time has (or will) the committee set; how can the proponents' time be used best?

It is important that coalition members agree on who will testify. Give each witness a specific topic to cover according to his or her expertise, and make every effort to avoid repetition. Agree on the sequence in which witnesses should appear, in order to present the "pro" arguments most effectively. Where witnesses who are not members of the coalition are desirable, begin lining them up early, since refusals will necessitate further search for the kind of witnesses you want. Make every effort to find out which opponents are going to testify and to anticipate their arguments with refutations in the proponents' testimony.

In preparing testimony, legislative, public relations and resource or research people should all contribute their ideas: resource—facts to back the points to be covered; legislative—political knowledge of which approach will carry the most weight with the committee; public relations—the kind of language that has the greatest value in appealing to the media and persuading the public.

On the day of the hearing, report the arrival of witnesses to a coordinator to ensure that their presence is noted by the committee. Give the legislative committee chairman (whom you will already have convinced to cooperate on this matter) a list of witnesses in the order you want them to appear. Some member of the coalition should be responsible for collecting all statements of endorsement brought to the hearing and presenting them to the committee at an appropriate time.

The Public Relations Committee should prepare press kits, which might include: a factsheet on the legislation; status of similar legislation in other states; a flyer; copies of major testimony; the names of other prominent and influential endorsers; a press release summarizing the main points of the testimony.

Getting endorsers

In addition to broadening the base of membership in a working coalition, the Coordinating Committee will want to enlist endorsements of the legislation from individuals and groups who may not be willing or able to join the coalition.

Endorsers are important because prominent names make news and because there are many segments of the general public and the legislature whose opinions and attitudes can be shaped and influenced by community and state leaders.

An early step in any major campaign should be a political analysis to decide how the voting population breaks down. Endorsers should be sought from all interests, but particular emphasis should be put on finding leaders whose opinions matter to those whom the coalition membership is least likely to influence.

Obviously, different kinds of endorsers appeal to different people. One person's views may carry great weight with influential legislators because the individual has control of a lot of political patronage; the general public may not even know who the person is. An outspoken clergyman may influence a large number of church members and yet extract little favorable response from the legislature. How you choose your endorsers and how you use their names and statements should thus be determined by the different groups you want to reach.

If labor is widely represented in the population, statements from prominent union leaders are needed; for a large rural population, farm and church endorsements. Leading sports figures, TV entertainers, radio talk-show MC's all have a following. Bipartisan political endorsements should be sought from influential politicians such as the governor, Democratic and Republican national committee members, state party chairmen, well-known and respected former legislators. At the district and community level, party chairmen and/or campaign managers, large contributors and local opinion leaders may be willing to make statements.

Few of these people will voluntarily and publicly endorse legislation unless they are asked to do so. Moreover, the more important the endorsement the more likely the man or woman is to be extremely busy and therefore somewhat inaccessible. A concerted long-range effort must be made to look for the leaders, to arrange for personal appointments in order to convince them, and to use the endorsements to the best political and public relations advantage.

Endorsements can be used in many different ways. A lobbyist could use the endorsement of a prominent farm leader when trying to convince a legislator from a rural district; endorsers' names and affiliations could be used on coalition stationery; a flyer could incorporate quotes of endorsement; endorsements can be the basis for news releases and articles; endorsements can be used on radio or TV debates or programs and in spot announcements or paid ads; and endorsements are always helpful when speeches are made.

The upshot is, lining up endorsers is a campaign in itself. Correspondingly, if you do a skillful job of it, you'll have moved further along the campaign trail.

Circulating petitions

The coalition will have to determine early in the campaign whether or not a statewide petition drive is an effective use of organizational resources. As you consider a petition drive, take into account how the petitions will be used. Circulating petitions is a lot of work, so that a final special event should be planned to justify the effort and publicize the petition results.

There are two major reasons for using a petition drive: 1) it is a high-intensity, short-term activity that generates publicity about the issue; 2) it demonstrates to the state legislature that a large number of people support the desired legislation.

On the negative side, a successful petition campaign requires an enormous amount of preliminary organization and the enlisting of a large number of people to circulate the petitions. It is true that many people will take on a job of limited duration who might not do other things, so that a drive may be the answer to getting your co-members involved. Moreover, the names on the petitions are fertile ground for later contact when a home district letterwriting or telephone blitz is in order.

If you decide to go ahead:

Alert district coordinators early so that they can find local petition drive organizers, who in turn can start lining up workers. It is essential that no legislative district be left completely uncovered. If necessary, the state committee will have to collect signatures in those districts where no coalition members reside.

Appoint state petition drive head and committee.

Set schedule for collecting signatures and delivering them to the legislature.

Work out public relations strategy, including plans for the final event when the petitions are turned over to the legislators.

Prepare and disseminate careful instructions on timing, how to recruit and train workers, appropriate sites, how to organize during the actual drive, tips on local publicity and how, where and when to deliver the petitions to a central headquarters.

Prepare at least these materials:

- flyers for public distribution;
- Q & A's for workers;
- petition forms.

At the state level tabulate the signatures by district and work out appropriate ways of making delivery to the legislature, for maximum legislative and public relations impact.

Monitoring the opposition—what to expect

It is the nature of the legislative beast to be cautious: to maintain the status quo unless there is overwhelming reason to change. Because inertia favors the opposition, they need only to *raise questions that cast doubt* on the need for and the effect of the legislation. The opposition is seldom required to *prove* anything. The burden lies on the proponents of the legislation to provide the overwhelming reasons: the factual need, substantial constituent support, and the lack of a legitimate and sound basis for opposition. In short, it is the offensive, not defensive, campaign that wins.

It is always preferable to anticipate the opposition and answer their arguments positively before they surface publicly. One reason for a coordinated campaign countdown is to organize to get across your side of the issue in a believable fashion, so that opponents' last-minute scare tactics will receive no serious attention. One cannot, however, always know ahead of time exactly what new techniques and arguments the opposition will think of. It is therefore essential to work out a planned strategy for keeping track of opposition attacks and responding to them quickly and in kind.

The opposition's negative attacks are sometimes emotional ones, designed to appeal to the heart, not the head, and to exploit fear of the unknown. True, opponents often represent legitimate constituencies in your state and have reasons for opposition that are legitimate in their eyes. While their right to hold these views should certainly be respected, you should make every attempt to change their minds. Furthermore, whenever and wherever they speak out, rebut vigorously. Opposition leaders outside the legislature sometimes do *not* represent real constituencies. Just the same, they look for and get publicity that gives them an influence far beyond a natural power base. Proponents have to learn in a hurry to use techniques for exposing this kind of opposition and its motivation.

All sections of your Coordinating Committee play a part in monitoring and answering the opposition:

The Legislative Committee analyzes the lobbying reports for the kinds of negative arguments legislators are making and the sources from which these seem to be stemming (e.g., from the party ranks within the legislature? from rural residents? from outside the state?, etc.).

The Field Service Committee analyzes reports from the district coordinators: who the opposition is, what they are saying, where they're saying it and who's listening to them.

The Resource Committee does research and prepares the materials to counteract negative arguments and present positive favorable arguments. In order to present the positive, the committee must keep track of fast-breaking developments, such as recent court decisions which may be exploited by the opposition.

The Public Relations Committee monitors statewide media coverage of the opposition. District and local coalitions should have people monitoring district and local coverage. The Public Relations Committee should help the Resource Committee tailor promotional material to the interests of the people you're trying to reach (e.g., what convinces the rural housewife won't necessarily convince the city blue-collar worker).

Where the opposition is given coverage, the committee should be alert to demand equal time: with TV/radio and newspaper rebuttals; with proponent speakers where the opposition has appeared, etc. Plausible individuals must be chosen, persons who appeal to and influence the opinions of the people you are trying to reach (for instance, in promoting women's rights legislation, a militant female feminist, no matter how good her intentions, probably won't carry much weight at the state VFW convention; a nurse who's a veteran of the Second World War might).

Present the arguments for the desired legislation forcefully over a sufficient length of time so that the facts take hold in the minds of both the legislators and their constituents. The opposition's last-minute barrages of letters and descents on the state capitol in droves will then have minimal effect. Nevertheless, you should anticipate this final flurry of activity and be prepared to demonstrate constituent support with favorable letters and with the presence of a wide range of proponents at the statehouse. When gathering supporter constituents for this final push, be sure to remind them that, regardless of how much we may deplore the importance of appearance, it's a fact of life and must be taken into account when demonstrating in favor of legislation.

Suggested calendar for action

A gradual planned build-up through the various peaks ensures that you are organized ahead of time to anticipate crises and forestall the opposition; that publicity can be generated at the right times; that public interest can be stimulated; and that the enthusiasm and commitment of your workers can be sustained.

All this effort does not guarantee a favorable vote, but few legislators care to go against strong constituent pressure. You must generate that pressure from the constituency as a whole and from particularly influential segments of that constituency.

Following is an outline of the tasks required at various stages of the campaign and a calendar for planning their execution.

The start-up

Begin educational campaign, particularly with members.

Organize or join and strengthen a coalition; set up field organization.

Plan fundraising for campaign.

Determine your deadlines. It is often hard to determine exactly when peak points of a legislative campaign will occur, but certain deadlines are usually definite, and these dates should be known:

- When must the legislation be filed? Or is it an automatic carry-over from the prior session?
- What committee will it be assigned to? Must the committee hold public hearings? Is there a deadline for reporting the legislation to the floor?
- Does the legislature adjourn on a specific date?

The hearing

If the responsible committee in either house of the legislature is hold a public hearing on the proposed legislation, the first peak of the campaign will occur then. If there is an option about holding a public hearing, proponents will want to consider whether or not the hearing would advance or retard their cause. If a hearing might be detrimental, consider asking the committee not to hold one. This is a strategy decision that must be made on the basis of the political realities in your own state.

Following are some tips on preparing for a public hearing (see *Anatomy of a Hearing*, LWVUS #108).

Consult with majority party and committee leadership to get a mutually advantageous hearing time and place.

Assign specific topics for testimony to members of coalition; seek additional testifiers with important constituencies and/or legislative influence.

Coordinate supporters' testimony and schedule witnesses to best advantage; find out who is scheduled in opposition and refute their anticipated arguments in proponents' testimony.

Organize massive attendance at hearing; publicize date, time, place along with "pro" arguments.

Prepare press kits for distribution at hearing; make personal contacts with statehouse reporters and wire services to get good hearing coverage.

Assign responsibilities for the day of the hearing, such as coordinating scheduling of supporters' testimony; line up media interviews for supporters; monitor opposition arguments; etc.

The committee vote and report

The next peak would be the crucial committee vote. Unless a deadline exists, timing will be hard to determine, but certainly intensive lobbying should go on at the state capitol and in each district, with hearing committee members in particular, up until that vote is taken. Ask supporters on the committee whether or not they want coalition help in writing their report. If you expect an unfavorable majority, make certain that a very strong minority report is presented.

The week before the committee vote is expected, update the committee headcount daily and maintain daily contact with field organizations in committee members' districts for peak lobbying effort.

The floor vote(s)

The final peak(s) will be the debate and action on the floor. The three-month campaign countdown shown below works back from the projected date of a floor vote.

Three months before vote

(This is written to apply to the pre-floor-vote stage; but it applies equally to the pre-hearing phase, with appropriate modifications.)

A. Have general briefing session for members of the coalition's member organizations and/or begin series of bulletin articles (substance + techniques + stimulation to act) for coalition members.

B. Solicit an invitation for a proponent of your cause to address joint session of legislature.

C. Anticipate sources and kinds of opposition. Prepare positive statements that answer typical "anti" arguments and publicize them before opposition surfaces publicly. Try to meet with potential opponents and move them into the neutral camp. The leaders of an *organized* opposition are not potential, they are real, but there are other influential citizens whose opposition can be reduced with a face-to-face discussion. The main objective is to identify them and convince them to *stay out* of the battle, even if they remain opposed.

With the help of your research committee, analyze your legislators and make a preliminary headcount; determine which techniques, organizations and individuals should be concentrated on whom; solicit help and advice of supporters on the legislative committee or committees responsible for writing the legislation and getting it to the floor for a vote.

D. Start lining up speaking engagements if you haven't done so earlier; organize and train speakers' bureau; prepare sample speeches.

E. Organize a plan for reaching each constituent in legislative districts. Decide which methods will be most effective, which ones you have the people power and/or finances to use.

- personal (house to house)
- postcard
- media
- distribution of material in public places.
- petition drive (if you decide to hold one, workers must be found and trained well in advance of drive).

F. Organize for a letterwriting blitz from your coalition and other supporters.

G. Assign a coalition member or committee to establish media contacts; analyze their attitudes, and keep the media informed.

H. Start lining up endorsers from all concerned segments of the community (religious, business and labor, political, ethnic, rural, housewives, professional groups, etc.).

I. Make personal contact with individuals who influence legislators to solicit their active support (campaign workers and/or contributors; party leaders; labor, business officials; members' spouses, golf partners, college classmates, etc.).

J. Develop material for public distribution—flyers, news releases, posters.

K. Plan a big, publicity-getting event, such as a rally or banquet with a notable figure, to take place just before committee or floor vote. If it is a statewide effort, involving state or national figures who will speak out for your goal will produce better news coverage.

Two months before vote

A. Launch campaign publicly. Could be by announcing a prominent figure as honorary chairman of coalition; launching petition drive; or having big kick-off rally for workers.

B. Use media contacts, radio spots, to intensify public education on the issue and to urge public support through writing legislators.

C. Conduct petition drive.

D. Set up speaking engagements, public meetings. A coalition member should be assigned to keep track of these and offer speaking services to groups you want to reach.

E. Maintain regular contact with legislative leadership.

F. Step up home district and state capitol lobbying. Now is the time to write and visit key legislators.

G. Solicit help of supporters in legislature (to testify, endorse publicly, work on colleagues, etc.).

One month before vote

A. Distribute promotional handouts in public places; door-to-door or postcard contact with voters.

B. Update pro/con headcount at least weekly for whole legislature.

C. Step up home district and state capitol lobbying.

D. Arrange to get supporters on interview programs; go after radio/TV news coverage.

E. Make regular announcements of prominent endorsers.

F. Stage one big event with a prominent name that can help the effort.

G. Present petitions to legislators with press release at press conference.

H. Set up letterwriting blitz to all legislators.

The week before floor vote

A. Make daily contact with field organization in districts for

peak lobbying effort.

B. Organize a last letterwriting blitz.

C. Conduct persistent person-to-person lobbying with legislators at capitol—daily update of headcount.

D. Intensify public information efforts through media publicity and distribution of material.

E. Coordinate work with influential legislators who will carry "pro" debate on the floor (prepare speech material for them; work to ensure the attendance of proponents during the debate and vote).

Additional statewide efforts before the floor vote might include one-minute or 30-second radio spots. You might also consider rallies, torchlight parades, or sound trucks, when these measures are appropriate.

A good legislative campaign includes coordination, cooperation, and a well-focused approach. While the demands are many, they can spell the difference between failure and success. So it's really up to you to make sure that before you shout "full speed ahead" on an issue, you know where you want to head, and you've put in enough supplies and support to be sure you reach your destination. □

The League of Women Voters recommends that you **TELL IT TO WASHINGTON**

JAN. 26 1982

Bring citizen action into your classroom

Voting is not the only way for citizens to participate in political affairs. Citizen action takes many forms. To be productive, citizen action requires effective communication with public officials — letting them know what's on your mind. Personal communication with legislators or with appointed officials who administer laws once they are passed brings citizens — even those too young to vote — into the process, makes them feel that their views count.

The League of Women Voters Education Fund has designed this package of basic how-to information and suggested class activities to help you introduce methods of effective citizen action to junior and senior high school students. It prepares them for the time when they can vote by helping them to look closely at issues, develop an informed opinion, and find out what their representatives stand for and how they vote.

It can also be an effective way of structuring a unit on the legislative process. You will know how to tailor these materials to meet the interests of your classes and to fit your community and your elected representatives. Although the activities are geared toward federal offices, you can readily apply them to state legislatures, city councils and other government bodies.

And with a little imagination you can adapt them to another sphere, the regulatory-administrative arena.

Citizens who want to have an impact on their elected representatives between elections have to do their homework. They must:

- ☐ know the issues;
- ☐ know the legislator;
- ☐ know the legislative process:
 - how a bill becomes a law,
 - the role of staff of elected representatives,
 - the role of congressional committees,
 - when to act.

As students learn to become active participants in the political system, not only will they learn about the legislative process, they will also develop these important skills:

- ☐ using the media to gather specific information;
- ☐ forming, expressing and defending an opinion;
- ☐ gathering information through personal interviews;
- ☐ communicating views clearly and concisely.

Why bother?

It's common knowledge that people will participate in politics if they can see and believe that their participation makes a difference for themselves and for others. One of your objectives in presenting these activities to students is to show them ways that they can participate in politics. First of all, students are prospective voters, and they have families and friends who vote. Also, your students should know that they are *constituents* of elected representatives, even if they are not yet voters. Let the students know that constituents are the most important people in a representative's or

senator's life. Members of Congress depend upon their ability to "take the pulse" back home in order to stay in office (this is especially true of members of the House who must run for reelection every two years). They rely on their constituents' willingness to let them know their views.

Share this passage from House Majority Leader Jim Wright's book, *You and Your Congressman*, with your classes:

If you are wondering whether or not it is really worthwhile to communicate your

views to your own senators or representative in Congress, consider this fact: Others who disagree with you are doing so constantly . . . Your congressman is one person to whom your opinion is definitely important.

Let students know that their first contact with an elected representative can be the beginning of a long and fruitful relationship. It can bring the satisfaction of first-hand involvement in the political process. Even if student and elected representative don't agree on an issue, that representative still wants to know what the constituent thinks.

Explore the issues

This section presents activities designed to familiarize students with issues. Issues are the content of legislation and the "hook" that draws citizens into the political process. Students must be knowledgeable about an issue before they can hope to influence someone else's opinion on an issue. They need to know what level of government is appropriate to the consideration of issues. For example, students need to know that a U.S. senator is not the official to ask to do something about sidewalk repairs. And a city council member doesn't vote on who will control the ocean floor.

Student activities

- ✓ Identify and compile a list of important current issues.

- ✓ Determine what level of government—national, state, local or a combination—could act on the issue.

- ✓ Designate which issues on the list are currently being considered by Congress or another government body and which are on the back burner.

- ✓ Translate the general concern on a broad issue, such as national security, into specific policy areas, such as arms control, defense spending and foreign relations.

- ✓ Have each student select a broad issue, investigate the component policy areas and then decide what choices they would support.

Understand the legislative process

To be effective, a citizen has to understand enough about the legislative process to take action at the most opportune time and to direct that action to the appropriate lawmakers. Take this opportunity to reinforce your students' knowledge of the legislative process by giving them an opportunity to participate in it. Along the way, you will be underscoring these essentials:

- A bill, a piece of proposed legislation, can go through as many as 25 separate steps in Congress before it becomes law.
- Bills are introduced by a member of the House or Senate, then referred to a subcommittee or committee for careful review and revision. These committees are very powerful. A negative vote in a committee can effectively kill a bill.
- The most effective point at which to affect the shape of legislation is at this stage—early in the legislative process. Students can contact committee members (no matter what district or state they are from) with their views on a bill before the committee.
- Another key time for citizen input is when a bill is about to be considered on the Senate or House floor. When the bill is "on the floor," it is the appropriate time to contact their own senators and/or their representative.
- Legislation that requires federal funding must go through two processes: authorization and appropriation. An authorization bill sets up the legislation program. An appropriation bill commits the money to make the program work.

... and the budget process

Budget decisions are policy decisions, so citizens have a great stake in contributing to the discussion of where money comes from and where it goes.

Since 1974, Congress has been using a new procedure for making budget decisions, one that allows it to consider the budget as a whole and its effect on the national economy.

Both houses of Congress have established budget committees to consider various alternatives and suggest a comprehensive budget package.

By May 15, both houses of Congress must agree on a budget resolution establishing government *totals* for spending, new budget authority, revenues, the deficit and the level of the public debt for the upcoming fiscal year. Students should know that if they want to affect overall budget policy, a strategic time to contact their senators and representatives, then, is before the 15th of May. A second resolution, which establishes spending *ceilings* and a revenue *floor*, must be adopted by both houses by September 15th. (Congress does not always meet its own deadlines, so consult your newspaper for revisions of this schedule.)

Student activities

Have the students:

- ✓ Choose one of the specific issues discussed earlier and determine whether any legislation on that issue is in the congressional hopper. The home offices of your senators or representative are good sources for this information.

- ✓ Determine what committee has been or will be assigned to consider it.

- ✓ Design a flow chart tracing the bill's progress through the legislative process. If the bill involves federal funding, make sure students track it through both the authorization and appropriation process and the budget process. The charts will be very complex, but realistic.

Student should also:

- ✓ Indicate on the chart where citizen action would be most effective and to whom it should be directed.
- ✓ Use newspapers and news magazines, to monitor important bills.

Sources

Your local League of Women Voters can tell you and your school library how to get these valuable resources:

- ☐ *You and Your National Government*, a guide to all three branches of the federal government including information and a chart describing the legislative process.
- ☐ *Congress and the Budget: From Chaos to Control*, a concise explanation of the congressional budget process, including a chart.
- ☐ *An Act of Congress, HR 6161*, a fascinating film that uses the course of the 1977 amendments to the Clean Air Act to dramatically present the ins and outs of the legislative process.

Communication made easy

Although the emphasis of these exercises is on letter writing and personal visits, students should know that there are many ways to communicate with elected officials.

- ✓ A letter to the editor of the local newspaper often catches the eye of an official with more emphasis than one that is sent to the official's office. You can encourage some of your students to send their letters to their local newspapers as well as to officials.

- ✓ The telephone, used correctly, can be a very effective action tool. Be sure to

admonish students to be well prepared and well informed, and to place their calls at a strategic time: just before a vote, for instance. If the member is not available, students can speak with the legislative assistant—the message will still be getting across.

- ✓ Telegrams and mailgrams are good ways for an individual or a group to get a quick message to Washington at a strategic time. You can send a 20-word telegram called a Public Opinion Message (P.O.M.) to the President or a member of Congress from anywhere in

the United States for only \$3.50 (or to your governor and state legislators for \$2.00 for 15 words). Name and address are not counted unless there are more than one signer. Mailgrams cost \$3.20 for the first 50 words, which includes name, address, message and signature. Each additional 50 words or less is an additional 90¢.

- ✓ A form letter is the least effective way to communicate with Washington, but when used as a follow-up to a previous contact it can be quite useful in underlining an opinion.

Get to know your members of Congress

Your students will need to know some basic facts about their members of Congress to communicate effectively. A good classroom exercise is to have students do a political profile of their U.S. senators and representatives. The political profile will include committee memberships because it's in those areas that representatives and senators are most likely to develop substantive expertise. Students will also find it important to know if their representative or senator chairs or is the ranking member (that is, top minority member) of a committee or subcommittee before which the bill they are monitoring is assigned. These positions give the elected officials — and their constituents — added leverage.

A word about staff

No member of Congress has enough time to cover all the bases, keep up on all the issues, reply to all constituent inquiries all alone. Each elected member has staff to assist in carrying out congressional or senatorial duties. In addition to staff assigned to the member's personal office in Washington and at home, staff also work for committees and subcommittees. Often staff develop expertise in issue areas equal to that of the elected members.

Student activities

✓ Develop profiles on the students' elected representatives. Here's an outline for a U.S. representative:

- Name;
- Party;
- First year elected;
- Next election (primary and general);
- Committee assignments;
- Leadership positions (include less formal leadership roles in caucuses or party groups);
- Congressional district #;
- Office address in Washington, DC;
- Washington phone;
- Chief administrative assistant;
- Chief legislative assistant;
- Nearest district office;
- District phone;

— District office staff.

✓ One exercise that brings home to students their role in the political process is a field trip to district offices. Although they will meet district office staff, students shouldn't conclude that they will not have the ear of the elected member. Your students can use the visit to let staff hear their opinions about bills. Staff members will be able to brief your class informally on the current status of legislation and the views of the member for whom the staff work.

✓ Some members of Congress, when they are at home, make it a point to hold public forums on issues of interest to their constituents. Bringing students to one of these forums will not only increase their knowledge about issues, but make politicians and government "real." It's a chance to speak up, too.

✓ Assign students to listen to radio or TV appearances of their elected officials.

✓ If your class is planning to make a trip to Washington, make it a point to visit your representatives' and senators' offices "on the Hill." Staff are always pleased to see constituents and show them around. Try to make appointments ahead of time and ask to meet those legislative assistants who are responsible for the specific issues in which your class is interested. Senators and representatives, too, are always ready to meet with a group of constituents from "back home" if their schedules allow and if an appointment has been made in advance.

Sources:

☐ *Tell It To Washington*, the League's guide to citizen action that includes a current congressional directory. Contact your local League of Women Voters.

☐ *Congressional Directory* is a compilation of biographies of members of Congress, descriptions of committee responsibilities, committee and subcommittee rosters, congressional and committee staff lists and other information.

☐ Local newspapers and other publications.

☐ Congressional newsletter. Many members of Congress publish newsletters to keep constituents informed of developments on the Hill. Students can ask to be added to the mailing list.

Marshaling the argument

Once you've led your students through the previous activities and exercises, they'll be ready to let their representatives know their views on pending bills. At this point they'll need help in organizing their views and presenting them in a brief, coherent manner. Now is the time they can refine their writing skills, and you can give them hints about crystallizing and framing their arguments. Below are some sample position statements, each with a different peg that helps to make them stronger and more effective:

— Knowledge of a member's record:

I know last year you opposed the bill providing the District of Columbia with an elected mayor and city council, but I think many of your colleagues would agree with me that the time has finally come for Congress to turn over local affairs in the nation's capitol to those who live and work there.

— An editorial or article in a local paper:

Enclosed is last Wednesday's LOCAL STAR editorial on our local community action agency. I have been following the work of our CAA for the past two years, and this editorial confirms my observations of effective work done here in

Hometown.

— Personal contact with a representative or senator:

I enjoyed your speech at Wright Junior College. From your comments on the Administration's budget, I know that you are as distressed as I am. I am particularly concerned about the continued availability of food stamps to the truly needy. I urge you to make it clear to the President how serious the social and economic costs to our community will be as a result of these projected budget cuts.

Student activities

✓ Assign the class to write short single paragraphs supporting their views on the legislative issues they are monitoring. Have the class critique the paragraphs for coherence and effectiveness.

✓ Have students compile facts and other opinions, such as editorials, that support their points of view.

✓ Present mini-debates on the merits of competing bills on an issue, taking opposing sides.

The letter

Letters are still the most widely used form of communication to House and Senate offices. One excellent exercise for students is to have them try their hands at writing and sending letters to their legislators. Each letter will be read *and* answered. Let students know that the amount of mail on a particular piece of legislation frequently helps determine the representative's approach to an issue. In fact, some members use their "mail count" on a bill as the sole determinant when voting. A student's letter may be answered with a form letter, particularly if it is on an issue or bill on which mail has been heavy. However, whether students receive a form letter or a handwritten response from their representative, the important thing

is that their communication will have been received and noted.

Remind students that if they are writing to a committee member, they may also wish to write to their own representative on the same subject.

Student activities

Below is a sample letter that you may use in your class to illustrate some of the aspects of a good letter. Once you've discussed the key points, have your students write a letter, using the bill that each one has been following. Make sure the letters are mailed. Have the students bring the responses into class.

351 Manor Road
Hometown, CA 90603
September 21, 1981

The Honorable Lilian B. Lawmaker
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Ms. Lawmaker:

I was pleased to read in the Hometown News that you spoke to the Downtown Merchants Association in favor of increased recreational opportunities for young people. I agree with your point that this is an important tool in the fight against juvenile delinquency.

I hope that this means that you will support HR 2518, the National Park Improvement Act, which authorizes additional federal funds for maintaining facilities in national parks. This bill has recently been reported out of the House Public Works and Transportation Committee and will reach the floor shortly.

I have enclosed an editorial from our local newspaper describing the dangerous and unhealthy conditions in Nearby National Park. My Boy Scout Explorer troop and I have spoken to the rangers at the park and they tell us that additional funding would help alleviate these conditions. My family and I found similar conditions at several of the national parks that we visited this summer.

I know that you have been reluctant to commit more funds for this purpose in the past, but I think that if you saw the conditions here, you would agree that something must be done. My classmates and I would be happy to take you on a tour of Nearby Park the next time you are in the district.

Sincerely,

Larry Outdoorsman
Senior, Hometown High School

Other hints:

- ✓ Write legibly — Handwritten letters are fine if they are readable.
- ✓ Use your own words and your own stationery.
- ✓ Feel free to write, if you have a question or problem dealing with procedures of, or services from government agencies. Congressional offices can often help you cut through red tape or give you advice that will save you time and wasted effort.
- ✓ If you have ideas about an issue you would like to see incorporated in legislation, write early in session before a bill has been introduced.
- ✓ Write the chair or members of a committee holding hearings on legislation in which you are interested, if you have facts which you think should influence his or her thinking. (If the chair is not from your state or district, also write to your own

representative or senators. As a constituent, you have more influence with them.)

- ✓ Don't apologize for taking your senator's or representative's time. If you are brief and to the point, he or she is glad to hear from you.
- ✓ Don't say "I hope this gets by your secretary." This only irritates the staff.
- ✓ Don't be rude or threatening. It will get you nowhere. Don't be vague. Be specific about the issues and what you want done about them.
- ✓ Don't write to a member from another district or state just because you disagree politically with your own senators or representative. Congressional courtesy calls for the recipient of such a letter to forward it to the member from the district or state involved.

1. Include a return address.

2. Be sure to use a correct salutation — for senators, "Dear Senator Smith;" for representatives, "Dear Mr. or Ms. Jones."

3. Be courteous and reasonable. Indicate areas of agreement, not just opposition.

4. Be brief and to the point. Discuss only the issue and/or one bill in each letter; identify a bill by number or title if you can.

5. Show that you have solid information about the bill, what it does and where it is in the legislative process.

6. Include pertinent materials that support your point.

7. Relate local needs to national legislation. Include first-hand knowledge of what is happening in your community.

8. Indicate if you are a member of a group with a particular interest in the bill.

9. Show that you have done some research into the issue.

10. Show that you are familiar with the member's past actions on an issue, especially if you are trying to change his or her mind.

11. Offer to provide more information, if requested.

12. Identify your occupation — if you are a student, say so and identify your school.



1/10/82

1980 Election Retrospective

The 1980 election returns confirmed the predictions of pollsters, survey researchers and other political soothsayers: voter turnout is and has been declining since the 1960 presidential election. The figures, however, brought some *good* news. Voter registration and turnout rates in the South are up, with voter participation increasing by 1.4 percent since 1976. The participation rates of some traditionally underrepresented groups are also on the upswing. Since 1976, Hispanic voter registration and turnout, for example, increased by 30 percent and 19 percent, respectively.* The gloomy fact, however, remains that in 1980 only 53.9 percent of the voting-age population cast ballots for the president of the United States.

Do the dismal election figures accurately portray American voter participation? Specifically, are the voter turnout figures correct? And, would we get a truer picture of voter participation by using different numbers to compute voter turnout? These two questions play an important role in any discussion of voter participation in the United States. This publication takes a closer look at this timely issue and also discusses another much-debated voter participation question—the possible impact of early, election-night network projections of victory on voter turnout at the polls.

Apathy or arithmetic?

National voter turnout is commonly reported as a percentage, determined by dividing the recorded vote for president (the numerator) by the U.S. Bureau of the Census's estimate of voting-age population in the United States (the denominator). While this percentage should provide a fairly accurate turnout estimate, it is important to bear in mind that several factors involved in the basic computation can affect the final result. Most analysts of voting trends agree that flaws in calculating both the numerator and the denominator of this national percentage produce a figure that is deceptively low.

Starting from the bottom and working up, the Census Bureau's decennial estimate of voting-age population, the denominator of our official turnout percentage, is a misleading base for computation. "Voting-age population" literally means all persons residing in the United States who were 18 years of age and older on the date of the last census, irrespective of their citizenship or registration status. But there are problems with this definition. According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, approximately four million aliens not legally eligible

to vote are included in its estimate of voting-age population. And, approximately half of a million persons who are, or will be, disenfranchised because they have been committed to prisons, mental hospitals or other institutions are also included. Furthermore, the longer the time span from the last census to the election, the less accurate the projections based on this outdated estimate really are.

Because the numerator, the top figure in the percentage, reflects only the total number of "valid" votes cast for president, turnout percentages are further depressed. Spoiled or invalidated ballots that were cast but not counted are not included in the official tally. Likewise, ballots of persons who actually turned out at the polls on election day but chose not to vote in the presidential contest are not counted. (In the 1980 election, the vote for governor or senator exceeded the vote for president in at least six states.) Occasionally the votes of persons who cast write-in presidential ballots may also not be counted.

Adjusted to take into account these statistical errors, the voter turnout percentage would probably increase to 60 or 65 percent of the potential electorate, a figure that still lags considerably behind that of most other democratic nations whose turnout of eligible voters generally exceeds 70 or even 90 percent (see box). Yet, some political analysts contend that even this adjusted voter turnout percentage underestimates the actual level of voter participation in the United States. They believe that the disparity between the U.S. turnout percentage and that of other nations is a result, not of voter apathy or disillusionment, but of the different denominators used in calculation. They contend that if the United States used numbers of *registered* voters rather than estimates of voting-age population as the denominator of the turnout percentage—as most Western democracies do—the U.S. turnout percentage would appear to compare more favorably with that of other countries.

There are basic flaws in this argument, however. While it is true that a U.S. turnout percentage would appear to be closer to 70 or 80 percent if calculated using registered rather than potential voters as the denominator, such a statistical sleight-of-hand would produce merely a cosmetic increase. The resulting percentage would not be comparable to turnout in other countries, since the margin of difference between the number of registered voters and the voting-age population is much greater in the United States than elsewhere.

Why is this registration gap so much smaller in other Western democracies? First, most of these countries have centralized registration systems, in which governments assume the burden of registering all eligible voters. Under these circumstances, voter eligibility requirements are generally uniform and more easily understood. (Four countries—Australia, Belgium, Greece and Venezuela—go as far as to make

*Figures obtained from a study conducted by the Southwest Voter Registration Education Project measuring the electoral participation of Mexican Americans and Latinos in presidential elections.

voting compulsory for all or most of their electorates.) In addition, the quality of maintenance of registration lists in these countries is higher, partly because this basic information is also used for tax rolls and birth, death and migration records.

In the United States, by contrast, registration is voluntary, and enrollment procedures vary from state to state. As a result, not many more than half of the potential electorate is actually registered to vote. Furthermore, the use of registration lists, as presently maintained, may produce a turnout percentage that is more pessimistic than reality. Lax provisions in many states for purging files result in lists weighted down with the names of registrants who have died, moved away or been otherwise rendered ineligible to vote. Alaska is a case in point. Due to inaccurate registration lists and the resulting, flawed projection of voting-age population, there appears to be more registered voters than persons of voting age (see table on page 3).

When all is said and done, the Census Bureau's estimate of voting-age population, despite its recognized flaws, does, in fact, provide the most valid base for comparing U. S. turnout with that of other Western nations. Rather than attempt to downplay any unflattering comparisons between U. S. and European voter turnout by focusing on statistical flaws, it may be worthwhile to look more carefully at the differences between the systems of voter enrollment and the conduct of elections. While procedural changes alone will not close the turnout gap between the United States and other democracies, there are a number of modest steps taken by other nations, such as Sunday voting, election consolidation, uniform absentee voting procedures and universal voter enrollment, that have made voting simpler and more accessible, thus contributing to their more impressive showings at the polls.

Picking up on these European ideas, San Diego, California recently broke new ground in the battle against the voting downswing with the largest ballot-by-mail election ever held in the United States. Despite some concerns raised by the use of this method, turnout in the May 5, 1981 special election was estimated at 60.77 percent of registered voters—more than double the turnout of any previous *off-year* special election. This recent experience serves to reemphasize the message sent to the United States by European countries—making it easier for voters to vote increases the likelihood of their doing so. □

Final vote counts for presidential candidates on ballots in one or more states

	Popular vote	Electoral vote
Carter	35,484,105	49
Reagan	43,904,153	489
Total*	86,515,443	538

*Includes popular vote for other candidates: Anderson (Independent) 5,720,060; Clark (Libertarian) 921,299; Commoner (Citizens) 234,294; Hall (Communist) 45,023; Rarick (American Independent) 41,268; DeBerry (Socialist Workers) 38,737; McCormack (Right to Life) 32,327; Griswold (Workers World) 13,300; Bubar (Statesman) 7,212; McReynolds (Socialist) 6,898; Greaves (American) 6,647; Pulley (Socialist Workers) 6,272; Other 53,848.

Unpublished data from the Election Research Center; used with permission.

Survey savvy

Survey of voting and registration of the population of voting age by ethnicity, sex and age: November 1980*

(Numbers in thousands; civilian noninstitutional population.)

Ethnicity, age and sex	All persons	Reported registered		Reported voted	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
ALL RACES					
Both sexes	157,085	105,035	66.9	93,066	59.2
18 to 20 years	12,274	5,485	44.7	4,387	35.7
21 to 24 years	15,864	8,367	52.7	6,838	43.1
25 to 34 years	35,733	22,156	62.0	19,498	54.6
35 to 44 years	25,552	18,031	70.6	16,460	64.4
45 to 54 years	22,495	16,653	74.0	15,174	67.5
55 to 64 years	21,074	16,376	77.7	15,031	71.3
65 to 74 years	15,324	11,835	77.2	10,622	69.3
75 years and over	8,770	6,133	69.9	5,055	57.6
Male	74,082	49,344	66.6	43,753	59.1
Female	83,003	55,691	67.1	49,312	59.4
BLACK					
Both sexes	16,423	9,849	60.0	8,287	50.5
Male	7,299	4,176	57.2	3,466	47.5
Female	9,124	5,673	62.2	4,821	52.8
SPANISH ORIGIN ¹					
Both sexes	8,210	2,984	36.3	2,453	29.9
Male	3,897	1,377	35.3	1,140	29.2
Female	4,313	1,607	37.3	1,313	30.4

¹Persons of Spanish origin may be of any race.

*Reprinted from U. S. Bureau of the Census Current Population Report Series P-20, No. 359, *Voting and Registration in the Election of November 1980 (Advance Report)*.

* * *

Surveys, such as those conducted by the Bureau of the Census after each national election (see above), are an important source of information on voter registration and participation. Because most states do not maintain or collect data on registration and voter turnout by sex, income, education, ethnicity or age, survey estimates are often the only available source of these demographics. At the same time, surveys also help to identify voting trends and pinpoint demographic characteristics that can offer clues to the likelihood that a certain segment of the population will register or vote in the future.

Because survey data is derived from population *samples*, it should not be confused or compared with data derived from the actual tally of presidential votes cast in each state (as in the table on next page). Surveys generally tend to show participation rates as higher than the actual tallies for several reasons:

■ Population subgroups that are more transient (such as students and the poor) or who are institutionalized are often under-sampled or even excluded from the survey. Since these subgroups also have registration and voter turnout rates that consistently fall below the national average, their omission from the survey sample results in an inflated estimate of voter participation.

■ Population subgroups that tend to have higher voter participation rates, such as the educated or wealthy, are frequently over-sampled.

■ Many respondents are reluctant to admit to the interviewer their failure to exercise their civic responsibility of registering or voting, resulting in an "overreporting factor." For these reasons, the Census Bureau's survey above shows voter turnout at 59.2 percent, while according to official tallies, only 53.9 percent of the voting-age population cast their ballots last November. □

Registration and turnout in the 1980 election by state

State	Voting-age population (VAP)*	Number registered	% of VAP registered	Number voted	% of regis- tered voters voting	% of VAP voting
Alabama	2,702,000	2,277,789	84%	1,341,929	58.9%	49.7%
Alaska	257,000	258,742**	100%	158,445	61.2%	61.7%
Arizona	1,779,000	1,121,169	63%	873,945	77.9%	49.1%
Arkansas	1,562,000	1,185,902	76%	837,582	70.6%	53.6%
California	16,956,000	11,361,020	67%	8,587,063	75.6%	50.6%
Colorado	2,050,000	1,434,257	55%	1,184,415	82.6%	57.8%
Connecticut	2,321,000	1,719,108	74%	1,406,285	81.8%	60.6%
Delaware	420,000	300,600	72%	235,900	78.5%	56.2%
Florida	6,876,000	4,809,721	70%	3,686,930	76.7%	53.6%
Georgia	3,629,000	2,466,786	68%	1,596,917	64.7%	44.0%
Hawaii	657,000	402,795	61%	303,287	75.3%	46.2%
Idaho	634,000	581,006	92%	437,431	75.3%	69.0%
Illinois	8,046,000	6,230,332	74%	4,749,721	76.2%	59.0%
Indiana	3,849,000	2,944,311	64%	2,242,033	76.1%	58.2%
Iowa	2,093,000	1,746,725	83%	1,317,661	75.4%	63.0%
Kansas	1,756,000	1,290,539	73%	979,795	75.9%	55.8%
Kentucky	2,532,000	1,824,469	72%	1,294,627	71.0%	51.1%
Louisiana	2,780,000	2,015,402	72%	1,548,591	76.8%	55.7%
Maine	790,000	759,978	96%	523,011	68.8%	66.2%
Maryland	3,039,000	2,064,883	68%	1,540,496	74.6%	50.7%
Massachusetts	4,298,000	3,142,908	73%	2,524,298	80.3%	58.7%
Michigan	6,557,000	5,725,713	87%	3,909,725	68.3%	59.6%
Minnesota	2,957,000	2,787,277	94%	2,051,980	73.6%	69.4%
Mississippi	1,650,000	1,484,140	90%	892,620	60.1%	54.1%
Missouri	3,569,000	2,845,023	80%	2,099,824	73.8%	58.8%
Montana	560,000	496,402	89%	363,952	73.3%	65.6%
Nebraska	1,138,000	856,182	75%	640,854	74.9%	56.3%
Nevada	533,000	297,318	56%	247,885	83.4%	46.5%
New Hampshire	657,000	553,236	84%	383,990	69.4%	58.4%
New Jersey	5,398,000	3,761,428	70%	2,975,684	79.1%	55.1%
New Mexico	869,000	652,687	75%	456,971	70.0%	52.6%
New York	12,900,000	7,869,587	61%	6,201,959	78.8%	48.1%
North Carolina	4,055,000	2,774,844	68%	1,855,833	66.9%	45.8%
North Dakota	469,000	***	—	301,545	—	64.3%
Ohio	7,701,000	5,887,488	76%	4,283,603	72.8%	55.6%
Oklahoma	2,131,000	1,469,320	69%	1,149,708	78.2%	54.0%
Oregon	1,909,000	1,569,222	82%	1,181,516	75.3%	61.9%
Pennsylvania	8,652,000	5,754,287	67%	4,561,501	79.3%	52.7%
Rhode Island	687,000	547,472	80%	416,072	76.0%	60.6%
South Carolina	2,069,000	1,235,521	60%	894,071	72.4%	43.2%
South Dakota	485,000	447,508	92%	327,703	73.2%	67.6%
Tennessee	3,205,000	2,359,002	74%	1,617,616	68.6%	50.5%
Texas	9,648,000	6,639,661	69%	4,541,636	68.4%	47.1%
Utah	901,000	781,711	87%	604,222	77.3%	67.1%
Vermont	359,000	311,919	87%	213,299	68.4%	59.4%
Virginia	3,817,000	2,302,405	60%	1,866,032	81.0%	48.9%
Washington	2,978,000	2,236,603	75%	1,742,394	77.9%	58.5%
West Virginia	1,357,000	1,034,546	76%	737,715	71.3%	54.4%
Wisconsin	3,446,000	***	—	2,273,221	—	66.0%
Wyoming	335,000	219,423	65%	176,713	80.5%	52.8%
District of Columbia	475,000	288,837	61%	175,237	60.6%	36.8%
National	160,491,000	—	—	86,515,443	—	53.9%

*U. S. Bureau of the Census Current Population Reports, Series P-25, #879, *Projections of the Population of Voting Age for States: November 1980*, (includes military and institutionalized persons).

**See text page 2.

***No statewide registration.

Information compiled by the Election Research Center, Washington, D.C. and reprinted with permission.

Funding for this publication was made possible by a grant from the LTV Corporation. Researched and written by

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The earlier the better?

On election night 1980, at 8:15 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, 5:15 p.m. Pacific Time, the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) announced that, based on its analysis, Ronald Reagan had won the presidential election. The other major broadcasting networks soon followed: the American Broadcasting Company (ABC) declared Reagan the winner at 6:52 p.m. Pacific Time, and the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) made its projection of victory at 7:32 p.m. Pacific Time.

These early network projections of a Reagan victory—California polls would remain open more than two and one-half hours after NBC made its projection—have reopened an issue that has surfaced periodically since the 1964 presidential election, when one network projected Lyndon Johnson's victory four hours before polls closed in the West. The basic question under scrutiny is whether the broadcaster's journalistic responsibility is to report facts only as they happen or to use sophisticated statistical sampling techniques and computer technology to project results *before* they become fact.

The resolution of this issue will depend, to a large extent, on the impact of projections on voter attitudes and behavior. In the spring of 1981, in testimony before the Senate Rules Committee, the House Administration Committee and the House Telecommunications, Consumer Protection and Commerce Subcommittee, representatives of the broadcast industry argued that there was no solid evidence that the projections had an adverse impact on voter turnout. The broadcasters stated that existing surveys on the effect of projections have so few West Coast nonvoters as respondents that any extrapolations from these small samples are invalid. Other observers have pointed out that some respondents to post-election surveys do not want to admit why they didn't vote—and some have even forgotten their reason! Still other political analysts have noted that people do not vote for a combination of reasons, such as illness and bad weather.

While knowledgeable observers have raised questions about the reliability and validity of surveys concerning early network projections because of the above reasons, others have pointed out that even if it cannot be proven that early projections had a negative impact on voter turnout, they may still undermine the fundamentals of the American electoral process. Early projections could have a detrimental effect on voter confidence in the integrity of the electoral system and the value of an individual vote and may, indeed, exacerbate the trend of declining voter turnout.

Projections of election-night victory are now possible because of more advanced technologies that use small statistical samples in key precincts to predict the outcome of an election. The exit poll, a survey of voters leaving the polling place, is one of the techniques used. Voters are asked for whom they voted and for demographic information on age, sex, race, income and other factors. Exit polls permit the prediction of winners at any time of the day as no official results are necessary.

Analysis of sample precincts is another projection tool. After the polls are closed, actual results are gathered in key precincts and quickly called in to statisticians for review. (Many local Leagues of Women Voters have been under contract to ABC to provide these precinct counts for ABC's election-night coverage.)

Following the 1980 election and in response to the early projection uproar, a number of legislative proposals were

Voter turnout in European legislative elections

Sweden	90.7%	September 1979
Holland	88.9%	May 1977
Luxembourg	88.9%	June 1979
West Germany	88.6%	October 1980
France	85.9%	June 1981
Denmark	85.6%	October 1979
Norway	82.9%	September 1977
Great Britain	75.9%	May 1979
Switzerland	48.0%	October 1979

Unpublished data from the Election Research Center; used with permission.

introduced in Congress designed to eliminate or lessen the probability that projections would affect election turnout. The major proposals called for:

- the regulation of the media's broadcasting of election returns;
- a simultaneous, nationwide poll closing on election day;
- a two-day voting period; and
- Sunday elections.

Some observers have rejected legislative solutions, pointing out that each has its own inherent problems. Restricting election-night reporting raises serious First Amendment questions. Simultaneous poll closing could prove a hardship on voters and election administrators in Alaska and Hawaii, where polls might have to open as early as 5:00 a.m. Voting held over a two-day period would escalate election costs due to increased expenditures for salary and rent. Sunday elections could also result in increased administrative costs and site problems since churches, which are frequently used as polling places, would already be in use. Costs would also increase with the opening and staffing of otherwise closed public buildings.

On May 4, 1981, thirty-two national organizations sent letters to major television, radio and cable networks and to wire services suggesting a nonlegislative solution to the perceived problem of early projections. These organizations asked the broadcasters to voluntarily refrain from making projections before polls were closed for any given election. The groups believe that voluntary restraint would neither infringe on First Amendment rights nor require federal intervention.

While representatives of the broadcast industry defended their right to report events that they deem newsworthy, others, including Ruth J. Hinerfeld, president of the League of Women Voters of the United States, Curtis B. Gans, director of the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate and March Fong Eu, California's Secretary of State, testified before the congressional committees that network projections may indeed affect turnout. In their opinion, the electoral process is too valuable to be manipulated by outside forces.

Regional congressional hearings are scheduled for the summer of 1981 in several Western cities. As this is written, no congressional action has been taken nor have the broadcasters agreed to refrain from projecting results before all polls are closed for any given election. Study on the effect of network projections is continuing in an effort to gain more understanding of the role of networks and their new capabilities in the election process. □