Working with Policymakers

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There is a culture clash between science & policy

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<th>Science</th>
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<td>Systematic</td>
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**Policy**
- AdHoc/Reactionary
- Generalists/Broad Range Issues
- Decisiveness
- Adversarial (compromise)
Congress is (dis)organized

**Senate**
- Health, Education, Labor & Pensions
- Budget Committee
- Appropriations Committee
  + Many other committees

**House of Representatives**
- Energy & Commerce
- Budget Committee
- Appropriations Committee
  + Many other committees
Congressional staffers are drinking from a fire hose

- 200 inbound e-mails from advocacy groups, constituents, and colleagues
- 25 e-mail alerts
- 5 news websites
- 150 headlines
- 15 Internet searches
- 5 Washington-focused publications
- 4 newspapers
- 3 news magazines
- 8 hours of (background) cable news
- 3 hours of radio news
- 5 online newsletters
- 5 Congressional Research Service reports
- 2 hours of committee hearings
- 300 pages of documents from Leadership’s Office
- 75-page report from Congressional Budget Office
- 25 faxes from interest groups
- 20 publications, position papers, received by mail
- 30 phone calls
- 4 lobbyist meetings

Source: National Journal
“We do not suffer from a lack of information here on Capitol Hill, but from a lack of ability to glean the knowledge and to gauge the validity, the credibility, and the usefulness of the large amounts of information and advice that we receive.”

Science policy can mean different things
Which science policy do you want to talk about?

Policy for Science
Impact the conduct and practice of research.

Science for Policy
Informs and enhances the development and implementation of policies.
Policy for Science

THE BUDGET!!!!
Scientists are looking for long-term funding...
The NIH doubling is behind us
Science for Policy

THE ENVIRONMENT
Science is JUST ONE factor in policymaking

- District/state/region priorities
- Jobs/Economy
- Risks may outweigh benefits
- What’s in the news
- Impact on ELECTION!
“[It] is important to remember that not all people will reach the same policy conclusion based on the same scientific information—even if they understand and accept that information.”

— Rep. Sherwood Boehlert (R-NY, retired)
Communication Strategies
Communicate in different ways

Source: Susan Joy Hassol, Physics Today
Goal: Change the **nature** of communication

Communicating **to** Policymakers → Communicating **with** Policymakers

*Be a good resource*

*Build a lasting relationship*
Your message in a minute

- Miniature
- Meaningful
- Memorable
Miniature

- Get to the point
- NO jargon
- Rule of three
  - Example: results, importance, potential applications
Federally funded biomedical research has had a profound effect on the health and well-being of Americans. We are living longer and experiencing a better quality of life. U.S. death rates from heart disease and stroke has dropped more than 60 percent. But serious disease challenges remain. The NIH budget is currently under $31 billion, and this year alone Alzheimer’s and other dementias will cost the U.S. economy over $180 billion. The Senate would raise this level to over $32 billion, even above the House proposal. Please support the Senate’s proposed budget for NIH.

Source: The Science Coalition
The 6\textsuperscript{th} W: Who Cares?
Meaningful: Communicating checklist

- Who is your audience?
- Know your timing
- Who are you?
- What is your message?
- Prepare to listen!
Meaningful: Know your audience

- Interest or connection to your message
  - Committees?
  - University or lab in district
- Understanding of the issue
- Position on the issue
- Context matters
Meaningful: Know yourself

- Discipline
- Research project
- Technical expertise
- Policy options?...
Memorable: TELL YOUR STORY
Memorable

- Talk about your personal experience
- **Connect** science to jobs, the economy, high skilled workforce
- Be willing to say ‘I don’t know’
Memorable

- Use **analogies or metaphors** to illustrate your point
- Use **visual aids** to reinforce the message
Memorable *don’ts*

- Use jargon
- Feel the need to answer every question
- Cast federal funding as an entitlement
- Throw another discipline or program under the bus
- Go crazy with the visual aids
“You do not really understand something until you can explain it to your grandmother.”

-- Albert Einstein
OTHER WAYS TO ENGAGE IN POLICY
Advisory committees play an important role
Not Ready for a ‘Solar Sandy’

By YOUSAF BUTT
Published: November 2, 2012

HORRENDOUS and damaging as it was, Hurricane Sandy would be considered only an opening act compared with a powerful “once-in-a-century” solar storm.
Think local!

- State/local politics
  - Education boards
  - Neighborhood advisory commissions
  - Local science advisory boards
    - E.g., air quality boards in CA
    - Science advisors to governors
Build bridges between science & society
THE GOLDEN GOOSE AWARD
Congressional visits
Bring scientists & science to policy
How much influence do different strategies have on undecided Members of Congress?

- In-person visit from constituent: 46% Large Influence, 51% Some Influence
- Contact from constituent who represents other constituents: 36% Large Influence, 60% Some Influence
- Individualized postal letters: 20% Large Influence, 70% Some Influence
- Individualized emails: 19% Large Influence, 69% Some Influence
- Phone calls: 14% Large Influence, 72% Some Influence
- Visit from lobbyist: 8% Large Influence, 74% Some Influence
- News editorial endorsement of issue: 10% Large Influence, 65% Some Influence
- Form postal letters: 1% Large Influence, 53% Some Influence
- Form emails: 1% Large Influence, 50% Some Influence
- Postcards: 1% Large Influence, 44% Some Influence
- Comments on social media sites: 1% Large Influence, 41% Some Influence
Practise!

You are meeting with your Representative to discuss the FY 2016 appropriations budget that the House and Senate are trying to finalize. Your congressman does serve on a committee with a direct connection to science and you represent a big university that conducts a lot of research. The Representative, however, believes that we must cut federal spending in order to reduce the deficit. Your objective is to explain why the federal government should invest in fundamental research and why it should be given sustainable funding.
Want more?

- Engaging Scientists and Engineers in Policy
  www.aaas.org/esep

- Communicating Science
  http://www.aaas.org/pes/communicatingscience

- Office of Government Relations
  http://www.aaas.org/program/govrelations