



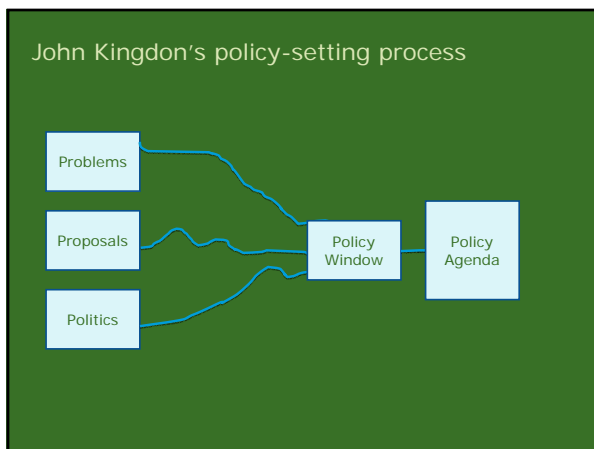
You *Can* Change the World
Advocacy Really Matters

Mary Eleanor Wickersham
Aging Services of Georgia, March 24, 2010

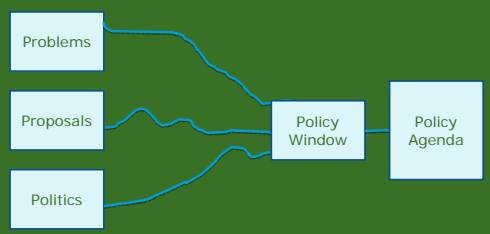


What we'll discuss

- How matters get on the policy agenda
 - Health reform as an example
 - Barriers to change
- Why advocates are essential for change
- How to be a more effective advocate



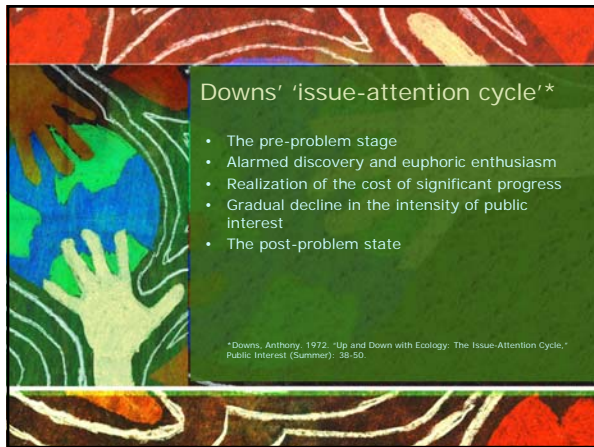
John Kingdon's policy-setting process





Other means of elevating policy items

- Natural disasters
- A perceived crisis
- Threats
- Protest activity
- Media reports
- Policy entrepreneurs
- Supreme Court decisions
- Executive branch promotion
- Legislative branch promotion
- Agency promotion
- Random events



Downs' 'issue-attention cycle'*

- The pre-problem stage
- Alarmed discovery and euphoric enthusiasm
- Realization of the cost of significant progress
- Gradual decline in the intensity of public interest
- The post-problem state

*Downs, Anthony. 1972. "Up and Down with Ecology: The Issue-Attention Cycle." Public Interest (Summer): 38-50.



Take health reform, for example

- "We favor the union of all the existing agencies of the Federal Government dealing with the public health into a single national health service without discrimination against or for any one set of therapeutic methods, school of medicine, or school of healing with such additional powers as may be necessary to enable it to perform efficiently such duties in the protection of the public from preventable diseases as may be properly undertaken by the Federal authorities, including the executing of existing laws regarding pure food, quarantine and cognate subjects, the promotion of vital statistics and the extension of the registration area of such statistics, and co-operation with the health activities of the various States and cities of the Nation." *

*Woolley and Peters, <http://www.residency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29617>

Health reform: on and off the agenda

- T. Roosevelt - 1912
- Truman - 1945
- Johnson - 1965
- Nixon - 1974
- Ford - 1976
- Clinton - 1993
- Obama - 2009

'National mood' for health reform*

- escalating costs that threatens the nation's economic security
 - 8.8 percent of GDP (product) in 1980 to 15.2 percent of GDP in 2003 to 17.9 percent in 2009**
- half the nation's hospitals are posting financial losses
- high unemployment
 - For each one percentage point increase in the unemployment rate, 1.1 million added to the rolls of the uninsured***
 - 2009: 45 million uninsured in U.S.
 - 2007: 1.7 million uninsured in Georgia
- Democrats in power in Congress and Executive branch
- Charles Grassley: "this is the year the stars will collide"

**<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/12/us/politics/12baker.html>
 ***http://www.hlf.org/insurance/snapshots_chart0103070th.cfm
 ****Bartley Alan, 2009, "Recession Forcing Many to Forgo Needed Care," *The Macon Telegraph*, (March 15), 5A.

Where is health reform now?

- The pre-problem stage
- Alarmed discovery and euphoric enthusiasm
- Realization of the cost of significant progress
- Gradual decline in the intensity of public interest
- The post-problem state



Barriers to change

- Iron triangles and issue networks
- Lack of money
- Complexity of the topic
- Tendency for incremental change
- Chasm between what people want and what elected officials want
- Lack of political will or opposing philosophies
- Past policies limit future choices



WHY ADVOCACY MATTERS



Why advocacy matters

- Advocates educate
- Advocates deliver grassroots support
- Advocates offer solutions
- Advocates keep the faith
- Advocates spread their enthusiasm



Advocates help educate policymakers

- Effective advocates know their subjects
 - They understand the issue
 - They understand the people they're trying to influence
- Most advocates are specialists, while politicians are, of necessity, generalists
- Advocates know the positives of the proposed policy as well as the negatives and are able to address both
- Advocates have data and anecdotal information used in proper proportion



Advocates deliver grassroots support

- It really does matter what the folks "back home" think
- More response isn't necessarily better (especially if it's not meaningful), but more can put an item on the agenda
- Grassroots support can elevate a policy item to the agenda
- Grassroots support puts a face with the issue



Advocates offer solutions

- "You can't beat something with nothing"
- A problem without a solution is still a problem
- A problem without a solution is whining



Advocates keep the faith

- Most change is incremental
- If one approach doesn't work, effective advocates try another
- Advocates take advantage of new information to attract attention
 - Knowing the data and being able to apply it
 - Taking advantage of incidents that point to the problem
- Advocates celebrate the small successes
- Advocates don't lose sight of the vision

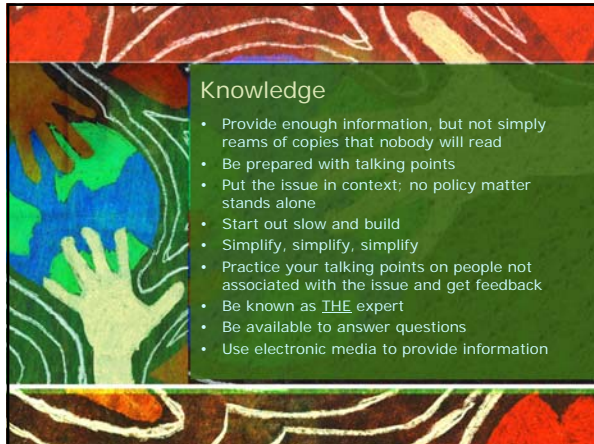


Advocates are passionate

- Passion about the issue is essential
- Enthusiasm backed by knowledge counts for a lot



MORE EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY



Knowledge

- Provide enough information, but not simply reams of copies that nobody will read
- Be prepared with talking points
- Put the issue in context; no policy matter stands alone
- Start out slow and build
- Simplify, simplify, simplify
- Practice your talking points on people not associated with the issue and get feedback
- Be known as THE expert
- Be available to answer questions
- Use electronic media to provide information



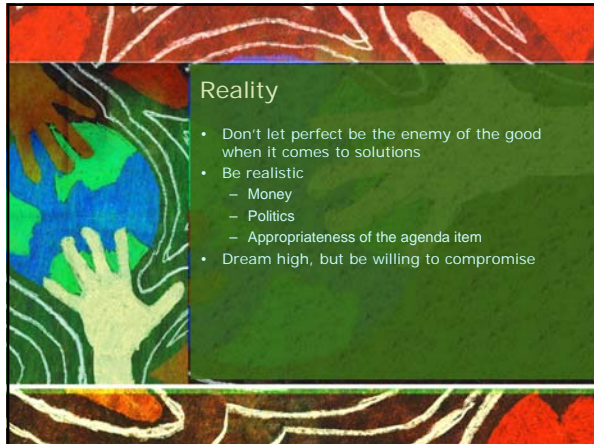
Trust

- Trust is not instantaneous – how do you know what you know?
- Be prepared to build relationships – they are way more important than money
- Be respectful to earn respect
- Think about what you want - is this reasonable?



Intensity

- Be persistent, but not demanding
- Don't expect to win over everyone
- Make your efforts count with people that matter
- Remember that issues are still issues *after* the legislative session
- Don't be rude
- Respect the time of those you're trying to convince



Reality

- Don't let perfect be the enemy of the good when it comes to solutions
- Be realistic
 - Money
 - Politics
 - Appropriateness of the agenda item
- Dream high, but be willing to compromise



Humor

- Laugh at yourself, not at others
- See the humor around you
- Be cheerful, even when it's hard
- Hand off the baton from time to time, when you aren't enjoying what you're doing or when you're ineffective
- Remember that not every issue is a life and death matter and that other issues should sometimes take precedence



Advocates make things happen.
You decide what kind of advocate you will be.
