

Public Policy

Public policy – when communicating with lawmakers, facilitating candidate/community issue forums, signing, or passing petitions in support of or opposition to legislation or regulations.

Stated on the KAFCE 2013 Accomplishment Report Tabulated Data Sheet.

A working definition of Public Policy:

“The study of what governments do, why they do it, and what difference it makes.” Thomas Dye

“...the combination of basic decisions, commitments, and actions made by those who hold or affect government positions of authority” Larry Gerston

Democracy is a form of government that gives all citizens the right to participate and to be heard. In the Hearth Fire Series #28, “Someone’s in the USA asking...Can I be a lobbyist?” It is stated that “as citizens of a living democracy, we know that the life of that democracy depends on its citizens having the knowledge, skills, and values to be effective citizens. Democracy is always a work in progress. It evolves in response to the creative action of citizens. It is what WE make it.” That means it is up to us. Democracy will not work effectively unless the citizens get involved.

How we become involved:

1. We need to know who our representatives are. What level of government are you going to be contacting? Is it city, county, state, or federal?
2. Communicate with your representatives! It isn’t always easy, but it will be worth it!!
3. We need to participate. Attend meetings.
4. Work to identify people who have the same feelings about issues that you do and form a coalition with them.
5. Be an informed voter! Ask questions.
6. Don’t give up. It takes time to get worthwhile changes made.

This will help you form ideas on how you can speak up and be involved in our government. It will help you with communicating and participating.

Public Hearings serve to:

- Provide citizens an opportunity to influence decisions, policies, and laws.
- Give individuals and groups a chance for person-to-person exchange.
- Act as a useful part of the democratic process at every level of government.
- Let decision-makers know what citizens think.
- Educate the public.
- Plan or evaluate current or future programs.

Public Policy issues gain their status when they reach the eyes and ears of the government. The process is initiated by individuals, special interest groups, media, and government participants.

Public Policy is the body of principles that support the operation of legal systems in each state, which ADDRESSES:

- Social
- Moral
- Economic Values that – tie a society together, vary in different cultures, and change over time.

Public Policy is made by public decision-making groups such as government bodies. These decisions affect families and individuals, either directly or indirectly.

When we want to change an issue affecting our way of life, or a “Public Policy issue” it is beneficial if we work in tandem with other individuals or groups, working for the same goal. When we look at public policy issues, we find that there are times when some issues are more prominent or draw more attention than others.

The life cycle of Public Policy Issue is:

1. Concerns – an awareness that things are not as we desire.
2. Issues Identification – surveys, studies, public forums, resource consultants, review newspapers.
3. Conflict – people have different interests and needs (group dynamics).
4. Rank Priorities – is there group consensus on which is most important, is there a danger of delay, are financial and time resources available to address the issue?
5. Analyze the Issue – who is involved, what is their interest, what is the status of the issue.
6. Consider Alternative Solutions and Consequences – list the advantages/disadvantages of each alternative, analyze each alternative, conduct a public hearing, identify factors limiting choices.
7. Make a Choice – state your position and rationale.
8. Develop a Plan of Action – What changes do you want to take place, what strategies can you use, who can help you, who will oppose you, what resources do you have? Determine tasks to be done and assign members.
9. Implement the Plan – determine whether your group should act as individuals or as a group, communicate your position to decision-makers, encourage other groups to support your position, communicate your position to all branches of the media, keep your members informed on the current status of the issue. Communication is essential.
10. Evaluate your efforts.

Below are guidelines for writing a letter to public officials to increase the chances that it actually will be read and taken seriously.

1. Decide on the recipient – get the name, title, and address of the official who will decide your issue.
2. Open letter in an official manner. Show respect for the position by using the title of the office and full name.
3. Start by explaining your purpose for writing this letter. Let your reader know immediately what your letter is about.
4. Summarize your understanding of the issue/decision being considered. State the general impact that you expect.
5. Explain your position on this issue. Describe in detail why you feel the decision made will lead to the impact.
6. Describe what any changes will mean to you and others.
7. Identify others who may be affected by this decision. Tell the official which and how many people will be affected.
8. Acknowledge past support. Mention appropriate actions and decisions the official made in the past and express thanks for them.
9. Describe what action you hope the official will take.
10. If you have written a letter that opposes some action, offer an alternative.
11. If you have time and you are committed, ask how you can help.
12. Close and sign your letter.
13. Check your letter for spelling and grammatical errors.

When writing your letter, keep it short. Limit it to one page. Make sure you identify yourself. In the first paragraph of your letter, state who you are and where you live. Your elected official needs to know that you are their constituent.

Public institutions address public policy issues:

- Executive Branch: President can sign executive orders.
- Legislative Branch: State Legislatures make policy with hundreds of statues or laws it enacts each year.
- Judicial Branch: Federal, state, and local courts establish policy through the interpretation of the law.
- Bureaucracy: A collection of agencies designed to carry out a relatively specific task, commonly described as the 4th branch of government.

Resources:

Family Community Leadership

“Come Ride with Us for an Adventure in Public Policy!”

What is Public Policy? How is it different from Private Policy?

Never Underestimate the Power of “ONE”!

