



Policy Discussion

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National Rural Funders Collaborative

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Importance of Policy

You may not be interested in politics, but politics is interested in you. -African saying

- ◆ Sustainability of work (when funding runs out)
- ◆ Institutionalization
- ◆ Enhancing problem visibility
- ◆ Bringing together coalitions around a public policy problem



Local and National Policy

Making the connection...

- ◆ Each level makes necessary contributions
- ◆ Grass-roots voices
- ◆ Scaling up
- ◆ Devolution
- ◆ Unfunded mandates



Policy Context



Public policy in Rural America must produce 3 benefits:

- ◆ Survival of the rural middle class
- ◆ Reducing concentrated rural poverty
- ◆ Sustaining and improving the quality of the natural environment (Stauber, 4/30/01)

Policy Context (continued)

Key points:

- ◆ Farm policy has been perceived as synonymous with rural policy for 70 years
- ◆ Few organized interests articulate nonfarm rural policy (except for specific, selective benefits)
- ◆ Congress acts as if it prefers not to address a national rural policy
- ◆ Rural advocates should seek a more modest, specifically localized and selective approach to rural policy (Browne, October, 2001)

Policy Context (continued)

Airlie House: Key issues

- ◆ Cooperation across jurisdictions in policy development and implementation
- ◆ Entrepreneurship market opportunities and the private sector as community development drivers
- ◆ The agricultural sector as a community development driver
- ◆ Community capacity, including workforce development and education (6/13/01)

What's Going on in Washington

- ◆ Preparation for war
- ◆ Budgets
 - E.g., taking money from WIC to fund conservation components of the Farm Bill
- ◆ Republican control
- ◆ Homeland Security

Therefore, retention phase



Public Policy and the Policy Process



- ◆ Defining the problem
- ◆ Getting on the policy agenda
- ◆ Formulating proposals
- ◆ Majority building (and beyond)



Public Policy and the Policy Process (continued)

- ◆ Budgeting for programs
- ◆ Implementing (regs; on-the-ground)
- ◆ Evaluation
- ◆ Solution or change

Education, Advocacy, and Lobbying

- ◆ Legislation is action by a legislative body, or any actions by the general public on a referendum, initiative, or constitutional amendment.
- ◆ Lobbying is communication to someone who may participate in the formulation of legislation (Congress, agencies) referring to a specific piece of legislation and expressing a view on that legislation.

(also grass-roots lobbying)

The Four Exceptions:

- ◆ Nonpartisan analysis, study, or research (content and distribution)
- ◆ Discussions of broad social, economic, and similar problems
- ◆ Requests for technical advice or assistance
- ◆ Self-defense communications

Criteria for choosing NRFC policy issues

The issue should be an issue that:

- ★ Is currently prominent on several states' policy agendas
- ★ Is consistent with already announced policy agendas of Congress
- ★ Is consistent with the announced policy agenda of the White House
- ★ Is an issue that is a priority for our agency collaborators (e.g., USDA, HHS)

The issue should... (continued)

- ◆ Have education materials already developed
- ◆ Be an issue that at least some of the NRFC learning network, including some of the funders and some of the grantees, are willing and able to work on with the Wallace Center and the NRFC
- ◆ Be consistent with the program emphasis of the NRFC
- ◆ Lend itself to education, advocacy, and mobilization for action – not lobbying
- ◆ Have medium to high priority within the current political environment or would benefit from the political environment in Washington, DC and Congress

Criteria for choosing NRFC policy issues

The issue might be an issue that:

- ◆ Could be addressed through administrative or regulatory change, not a change in legislation
- ◆ Is an issue where there is clear connection with other stakeholders (including urban and other rural constituencies)