INTRODUCTION TO ADVOCATING FOR ENGINEERING

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February 6, 2023
LEWIS-BURKE AND ASEE

Lewis-Burke Has Worked With ASEE Since October 2017

- Founded in 1992; located in Washington, DC
- 40 policy experts with range of expertise/backgrounds allow multi-layered issue teams with deep expertise in federal agencies, Congress, and science, engineering, technology, and education areas
- 55 clients composed of science and education entities, universities, scientific societies, managers of large federal facilities, foundations, and industry

Goals of Work with ASEE 2017-2022

- Increase ASEE advocacy and presence in Washington and among federal stakeholders
- Preserve and expand federal support and sound policy for engineering education and research
- Support ASEE councils to enhance advocacy goals of deans and other constituencies
- Inform future federal programs and create programmatic opportunities for ASEE and the ASEE community
- Elevate the role of ASEE within the higher education and science advocacy communities
ADVOCACY: WHAT’S THE POINT?
WHY ADVOCATE?

Advocacy:
• The process by which ordinary citizens make their interests known to Congress

You can help members of Congress make informed decisions on key policies impacting engineering research and education

Your schools and colleges have great connections to your states and congressional districts through employment, education, and research
• You have a unique position and expertise to share with federal policymakers

Advocacy puts engineering issues on the map – offices cannot pay attention to every issue and rely on hearing from constituents to prioritize
ASEE CONGRESSIONAL PRIORITIES

Advocate for Funding at Critical Agencies
• National Science Foundation research and education funding
• Department of Defense basic and applied research
• Specific research accounts for other mission agencies (e.g. ARPA-H, Commerce, DOE, NASA, NIH)
• Pell and other student aid

Protect Against Threats to Engineering Schools and Colleges
• Science and Security
• Immigration – high-skilled immigration and student talent pipeline

Inform Education, Research, and STEM Policy
• Research agency reauthorizations (e.g. Defense, Quantum, Computing, NASA)
• Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act reauthorization – support for work-based learning; involvement of four-year institutions
• CHIPS and Science implementation
BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS
Most of the budget goes to Mandatory Spending
- Social Security
- Medicare/Medicaid, etc.
- Interest on the debt.

Congress uses the annual appropriations process to decide funding for everything else
- Education
- R&D
- Housing
- Transportation, energy, and environmental protection
- Defense, homeland security, and law enforcement

Note: Appropriations is the actual $$, there are also Authorization bills—these pieces of legislation may authorize a level of funding for an existing or new program, but those are only suggested levels...it is still up to appropriations to decide the actual funding level

Source: Congressional Budget Office
60% of federal research investments in university engineering are funded by the Department of Defense and the National Science Foundation.

The federal government invested a total of $7.8 billion in engineering academic R&D in FY 2021.

Source: 2021 NSF Academic Research and Development Report
President proposes overall priorities, major initiatives, and specific funding for agency programs through the annual budget request

- Developed by federal agencies in concert with the White House Office of Management and Budget

Congress determines overall spending levels through the Budget Committees

Appropriations Committees decide how money is spent on individual agencies and programs

- 12 subcommittees write individual appropriations bills covering different parts of the government
- E.g. Commerce, Justice, Science (NSF, NASA, NIST); Defense (DOD); Energy and Water (DOE); Labor, Health and Human Services, Education (NIH, ED, workforce development programs)

Full House and Senate vote on bills and President signs to become law
“REGULAR” TIMELINE

February:
• President submits budget request to Congress

March – April:
• Congress adopts budget resolution (overall budget blueprint)
• Individual Members able to weigh in on their priorities
• Appropriations subcommittees hold hearings to review agency budget requests

May – July:
• Appropriations subcommittees and then full committees “mark-up” (review/amend) and approve individual bills
• Individual bills are debated/amended and passed by full House and Senate

September:
• Conference committees resolve differences between House and Senate bills
• Conference agreements approved by House and Senate
• Bills sent to President for signature/veto
• New federal FY starts on October 1
THE REAL PROCESS

Budget deals have been used to set overall spending levels
  • Budget resolutions have been passed mostly to access reconciliation instructions for healthcare/tax priorities

Congress is almost always unable to pass appropriations bills on time
  • Leads to continuing resolutions or risk of government shutdown

The House and Senate rarely complete individual bills
  • Often package all bills into an Omnibus to enable just one or two votes on final deals
  • Sometimes individual bills do not receive floor consideration or even full committee mark-up before being rolled into this process
WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ADVOCACY

There are multiple points to inform the appropriations process

**Individual members have most impact in early Spring**
- When bills are being drafted

**Appropriations Committees have incredible power but need to hear from all Members about their priorities**
- Members need to hear from their constituents!

**Don’t get too invested in budget request or early committee draft funding levels**
- Overall levels can change based on final budget deal
EDUCATION, RESEARCH, AND STEM POLICY
AUTHORIZATION COMMITTEES

Authorizing Committees have oversight over agencies and set policies through reauthorizations
• Some also control mandatory funding

Many Committees are relevant to engineering
• House Science, Space, and Technology (NSF, NASA, NIST, EDA, STEM, research parts of DOE and DOT)
• House and Senate Armed Services (DOD)
• Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation (NSF, NASA, NIST, EDA, DOT, NTIA)
• House Transportation and Infrastructure (DOT)
• House Education and Workforce (ED, DOL)
• Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (ED, NIH, ARPA-H, and DOL)
• House Energy and Commerce (NIH, ARPA-H, NTIA)
• House and Senate Judiciary (Immigration)

Reauthorizations happen on different timelines
• Some are every year like the National Defense Authorization
• Most are multi-year (surface transportation, NSF, higher education)
• Committees can still impact agencies even when not doing reauthorizations
  • Through oversight functions – hearings, letters, etc.
WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ADVOCACY

Understand what committees your Member is on
• Know what bills that committee is working on (e.g. House Education and Workforce working on WIOA)

Committees can be helpful when you have a concern about an agency
• But they can also create a lot of distraction

Authorizing committees tend to have more hearings
• Chance to ask questions, highlight important programs, and find out info from agencies

Don’t get distracted by funding levels – unless they’re real appropriations!
• Discretionary authorization levels are just suggestions (that appropriators usually ignore!)
  • President’s budget request levels are similarly just suggestions
• Recent uptick in authorizing bills having appropriations or mandatory funding in them – e.g. CHIPS
HEA is only reauthorized about once a decade
  • Or two? last time was 2008
  • With overall challenge of passing, financial aid changes often get made other ways
    • Loan consolidation in Obamacare
    • Earlier versions of Build Back Better and competitiveness bill had Pell changes
  • Likely will see many messaging bills this Congress due to split control of the House/Senate
  • WIOA reauthorization could contain higher education workforce provisions such as Perkins CTE

HEA is extremely broad
  • Financial aid, ED grant programs, teacher training
  • Campus safety, free speech, accreditation, and education regulations

HEA sets mandatory spending on federal student aid
  • Part of Pell, loan limits/types of loans, forgiveness programs

HEA sets a broad framework for policies
  • ED maintains broad authority to set specific policies through regulations
Judiciary Committees officially oversee immigration
• Policy is often discussed by congressional leadership, “Senate gangs,” other congressional groups
• New judiciary committee leadership in the House for the 118th Congress

Much of immigration policy is set by Administration and Courts
• Members of Congress can raise concerns about these actions

Broad congressional interest in supporting high-skilled immigration
• Disagreement is typically about other issues
• High tech industry tends to be loudest advocates on this issue

Advocacy can spur interest in under the radar issues
• Help push for broader deals
They care about more than fundraising
• The needs of their districts and states
• The local economy
• Concerns about the negative impact of specific legislation
• Developing relationships with influential groups and interests
• Elevating leadership on key issues
• Positive attention from the media
• Issues of personal importance to the Member
• Getting re-elected or their legacy if retiring

Information, anecdotes, accurate data, and local stories are useful for policymakers
Know that success can take many forms

• The opportunity to inform an office about engineering research and education is a win
• Providing valuable information to the policymaker or their office is a win
• Becoming a resource is a win

Advocacy is about long-term relationships

• Meetings this week are just the first step
Familiarize yourself with basic information to prepare

Federal relations representatives are a huge asset

- They can help you know a lot about a Member:
  - Political affiliation
  - Committee assignments
  - Relevant biography points
  - What's in the district
  - Priorities to connect to and things to AVOID in conversation
- Can also get info on priorities from press releases/Twitter feeds
- If you don’t have a federal relations representative - we can help

Look over ASEE advocacy documents (talking points/handout):

- Ask questions if you don’t understand something
- Think of relevant research, partnership, and student success examples
  - Ideally connected to Member priorities and their district
Your meetings will likely last 15-30 minutes.

Follow the talking points
• They provide a flow for meeting and more specific points you can make on relevant topics

Before each meeting be sure to:
• Discuss participant roles in the meeting and main topics for discussion

Begin the meeting:
• Thank the staffer or Member for taking the time to meet with you
• Introduce yourself and explain why you are meeting
• Discuss what you are advocating for

During the meeting stick to your message and articulate your asks clearly
• Don't be afraid to refer to your handout

End your meeting the way you started it – by saying thank you
• Send a thank you email where you can also share the handout or other materials
EXAMPLE OF MEETING OUTCOMES

Good Outcome

The Staffer:

• Takes the meeting, listens to your message, and thanks you for the meeting

• Listens to your message but does not commit to taking any action on your “ask”

• Listens to your message, asks questions and requests additional information to help them make an informed decision

• Listens to your message, says they will take action on your “ask”, and requests to stay in touch on a regular basis

Great Outcome
## DOS AND DON’TS

### DO
- Be courteous to all
- Arrive on time
- Build in time to travel between office buildings for meetings
- Listen, even if you disagree
- Offer specifics when possible (e.g. bill names, numbers)
- Offer to provide further information following the meeting
- Send a thank you email

### DO NOT
- Prolong the meeting beyond its timed or natural conclusion
- Be discouraged if your meeting contact appears young
- Be surprised if the meeting occurs in a strange location like a hallway
- Bring weapons, gifts, or sealed envelopes to the meeting
- Argue- make your point but don’t get into a prolonged back and forth
FOLLOWING UP

Decide who in your group will follow-up
- Thank staff again via email and send any information they requested (that the group agreed to share)
- If you meet with Members, consider sending a formal thank you letter from all the deans participating

Keep abreast of Member activity related to the issues you discussed with staff
- Legislation introduced, letters signed, etc.

Thank staff for any effort undertaken by the Member in support of your “ask”
- Signed a letter, voted a certain way, talked to committee staff or other Members
- Gave a floor speech, hosted a briefing, asked a question at a hearing

Send updates periodically if staff had a major point of interest
- Exciting research news, new partnership in district, etc.
- Try to establish ongoing relationship
OTHER WAYS TO ENGAGE

Letters, Emails & Phone Calls
• Effective for requesting immediate action (e.g. “Vote yes on H.R. XX this week”)

Social Media
• Twitter, Facebook, etc. – good for pictures, giving a public thank you
• Use nonpartisan messages

Attend Town Hall Meetings
• Be an active participant in government

Media Placements
• Op-Eds, trade magazines/newsletters, etc.

Chance Run Ins – the dog park, the library, etc.
• Have your “elevator message” ready in the event you only have a few seconds to deliver it
QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION

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