

Understanding and Influencing Policy (without Getting in Trouble)

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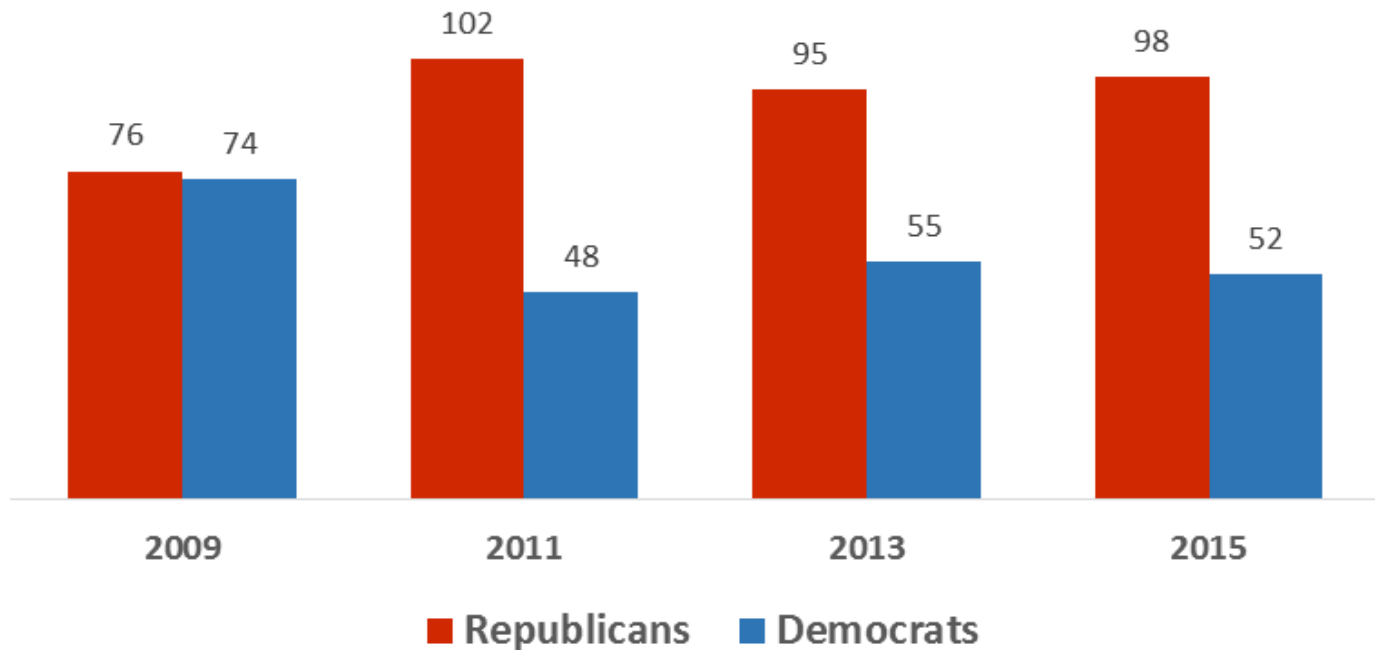
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Overview

- Why fund policy work?
- Advocacy and Lobbying
- What can nonprofits do?
- The Policy Funding Continuum
- Lone Ranger or The A-Team?
- Case Studies
- Questions, Concerns, Tar, Feathers

Anyone can win anywhere.

Composition of Texas House of Representatives
(N=150), 2009 to 2015



Why fund policy work?

- You can achieve the greatest possible return on your investment.
- Some of your grantees are already doing it, but are they doing it well (and legally)?
- The public sector is gradually absolving responsibility for society's ills to you.
- Multiple entry points allow foundations to tailor work to their interests and abilities.

Why not fund policy work?

- Policy is “political” and we don’t do politics
- Fear of antagonizing lawmakers and other influential community/business players
- Lack of clarity about lobby laws and how they apply to foundations and grantees
- Reticence among lawyers and accountants
- **Because we *never* have...**

Advocacy and Lobbying

- Advocacy is a broad and general position. **“Poverty is bad for kids.”**
- Lobbying begins when advocacy becomes very specific to a proposal or piece of legislation. **“Poverty is bad for kids. Support this bill to make poverty less bad for kids.”**
- **How do you engage and with whom?**

Nonprofits can

- Communicate and encourage others to communicate with elected officials about specific legislation
- Meet with elected officials about legislation
- Testify at public hearings
- Publicly support or oppose legislation
- Provide research, analysis, and commentary
- Invite a legislator to visit

Nonprofits cannot

- Raise funds for candidates as an organization
- Publicly support or oppose a candidate
- Conduct PARTISAN voter registration
- “Electioneer”

Pro Tip: Ask grantees to take IRS “H Election” for clarity concerning lobbying expenditures.

Maybe it's not lobbying at all

- Self-defense communications
- Contacts with elected officials or agencies about regulations and administration
- Lobbying by volunteers and board members
- Communication on specific legislation with no call to action
- Participation in a hearing at the request of a legislative committee or chairman

Policy Funding Continuum

Research and
Reports

Grants to Advocacy
Organizations

Trustee Engagement

ADVOCACY

LOBBYING

There is a place for every
foundation on the continuum.

Lone Ranger or The A-Team?



How to win.

- Focus Focus Focus
- Build Credible Research Case
- Recruit Believable Messengers
- Work Political Process Pragmatically
- Prepare to Win / Partner with Government

Your place on the continuum

Two Case Studies

- RGK Foundation – One foundation and one issue of personal importance.
- TEGAC * – Thirty foundations and one broad theme of general importance.

* Texas Education Grantmakers Advocacy Consortium
(www.tegac.org)

RGK Foundation: The Lone Ranger for Health

- Focus: Middle School Physical Education
- Research: Revenue Neutral Policies
- Messengers: Advocates, Faith, Business
- Political Process: Interim and Session
- Partner w Government: State and Districts

Result: 3/5 recommendations in statute in 2013

Total Cost: About \$150,000

TEGAC:

A-Team x 30 (and counting)

- Focus: Public Education
- Research: Bush School, Ray Marshall Center, Children at Risk
- Messengers: Cops, Military, Faith, Business
- Political Process: Interim and Session
- Partner w Government: Governor Greg Abbott

Result: Big policy change and appropriations

Total Cost: About \$600,000 for 2014 thru 2015

And for the record...

The Lone Ranger was a founder of The A-Team.



What you can do now

- Require grantees to take H Election with IRS.
- Provide training on nonprofit lobby law and advocacy strategy to all grantees.
- Provide general operating grants to nonprofits that want to lobby.
- Educate your own legal counsel and accountants about lobby laws.
- Pick the place on the policy continuum that is right for your foundation and your board.

You are not alone

- Utilize Philanthropy Southwest
- Engage your network of peers
- Contact with any questions:

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