

Strategy Exercise

Federal

The Campaign To Improve Foods Sold Outside School Meal Programs

Overview Participants practice creating a strategy chart for an issue advocacy campaign using a hypothetical scenario involving an issue before the U.S. Congress.

Time Total: 30 minutes

- Exercise: 20 minutes
- Debrief: 10 minutes

Background

Nutrition standards for foods sold outside school meal programs but in schools (competitive foods) have not been updated since 1979. Such foods include those sold in vending machines, cafeteria a la carte menus, and school stores. The only nutritional criteria for school foods sold outside of meals are that “foods of minimal nutritional value” (FMNV) may not be sold in the food service area during meal times.

This year, the U.S. House Committee on Education and Labor has introduced The Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act (H.R. 789). This bill, reauthorized every five years, has jurisdiction over school meal programs. In the past, Congress has considered nutrition standards for competitive foods, but has not put them into law. Members from both parties have supported and opposed these standards.

National PTA, representing the wishes of its members, has asked Congress to amend the Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act to include a minimum federal protective nutrition standard for foods sold outside of school meals. National PTA Public Policy staff has done an analysis to determine which members of Congress need to be targeted to pass the amendment and the final bill.

Rep. Ethan Charles,

(D, New Leif- CD 2)

In 1997 Rep. Ethan Charles (a purely fictional Congressman from the equally fictional state of New Leif) was appointed Assistant State's Attorney in the County and served until 2001. Active in the Young Democrats, he was elected to the American Council of Young Political Leaders' delegation to Taiwan. In 2003, at the age of 34, he was the elected State's Attorney (youngest) for the County. He was on the Governor's transition team.

Elected to his first term in Congress in 2008 Charles has tended to vote more with the “moderates” believing that his margin of victory came from Conservatives and Independents. He voted against the House health care bill on the grounds that it is too big and too costly — a view that some of his constituents share.

Rep. Charles is a member of the House Committee on Education & Labor. Two members of the State PTA recently met with Rep. Charles. He told them that while he was concerned about the health of children he thought that the PTA was going a bit overboard. “Kids will be kids” he said, “... and they will buy junk food anyway – that’s what kids do. At least when they buy it from school vending machines a percentage of the sales goes to support school sports programs.” National PTA Public Policy staff has determined that Rep. Charles’ vote for the amendment in committee is essential to its passage. He could be the deciding vote! In addition, they think getting his support will also help in getting other members on board.

In a conference call with state presidents, NPTA Public Policy staff have laid out the strategy to pass The Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act. Your state president in turn has called your County Council to ask that you develop a campaign to get Rep. Charles to vote for the amendment as well as the final bill. The vote is expected to take place in three months. During his campaign, Charles supported the concept of “Healthy Schools”. He now says that he is getting a lot of pressure from Conservatives and Libertarians in his district to oppose any federal legislation that preempts state and local control of nutrition standards.

Charles’s district is just outside a major metropolitan area. It touches the city and takes in suburbs and tourist regions. It then extends into rural areas (with some small farms) until it reaches the city of Wellsboro, the regional center of food production and processing (including snack foods) and the Super Cola bottling plant.

The PTA County Council has assigned one staff person to work half-time on this issue. In addition there are two interns from a local community college in the district, who are available three afternoons a week. Besides salaries and travel expenses, the Council has only \$1000 for work in the Charles district. Any more will have to be raised.

The district is considered 64% urban. In this district, 13% of the population is over the age of sixty-five which is about the national average. By actual count that comes to 89,000 people. An additional 59,000 people are between the ages of 55 and 65. The largest minority group in this district is African American (9%). Other groups total only 2%. The median family income in the district is \$52,000 a year, which is about ten thousand over the national average.

In the four elections prior to 2008, this district went Republican, and was considered a safe seat for Millard Gilpeak although there was always the possibility of a primary challenge from the right wing of the party. This occurred in the 2008 primary and Gilpeak was ousted by a conservative Republican. Once off the Republican ticket, Gilpeak endorsed the Democrat, Charles, who won by a very narrow margin.

Gilpeak's voting record on social issues showed him split between liberal and conservative positions. In fact, his *National Journal* rating was 56% liberal and 44% conservative on social issues and about the reverse on economic issues. He was endorsed by the Sierra Club and League of Conservation Voters. He supported gun control, equalization of school funding and DC statehood. He recently voted for the minimum wage increase but against card check recognition to help union organizing.

Rep. Charles's Positions

- On federal budget issues, he is a deficit hawk. He supports adding a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution and strict spending caps for Congress.
- Unlike his Republican predecessor, he opposes gun control.
- He is for strict enforcement of immigration laws.
- During this first term, he voted for the Stimulus package, and the Clean Energy Bill.

District Voting Data

The actual voting data shows some potentially useful patterns.

Total Vote in 2000	Gilpeak (R)	Rosterman (D)
	165,293 64%	91,022 35%
	Bush	Gore
	160,402 57%	111,807 40%
Total Vote in 2002	Gilpeak (R)	Fishbine (D)
	182,204 77%	55,609 23%
Total Vote in 2004	Gilpeak (R)	Schwartz (D)
	245,149 76%	77,872 24%
	Bush	Kerry
	213,144 62%	124,163 36%
Total Vote in 2006	Gilpeak (R)	Gronoffski (D)
	185,353, 69%	83,817 31%
Total Vote in 2008	Marris (R)	Charles (D)
	173,478 48.4%	176,052 49.1%
	Bixbe (Libertarian)	
	9,190 2.5%	
	McCain (R)	Obama (D)
	216,896 59%	148,029 40%

Voter Registration and Turnout in Charles's District

	Registered 2008	Voted in 2008	Percent Voted 2008
Republicans	193,584	161,330	83%
Democrats	200,216	160,753	80%
Unaffiliated	71,443	50,310	74%
Libertarian	1,141	784	69%

There are parts of 12 counties in this district. Of those, Obama carried only two, the second largest county and the smallest. Charles carried in seven counties of the ten that also went for McCain.

Possible Opposing Organizations

Name	Notes
National School Board Association (NSBA)	NSBA supports state and local control of nutrition standards, but does not support federal regulations.
Snack Food Association	The Snack Food Association supports the snack food industry and represents snack manufacturers and suppliers. They are wary of federal restrictive nutrition standards and have concerns that their products won't meet these standards. If federal standards were passed, they prefer these standards to preempt state standards so that their products don't have to meet both state and federal standards.

Assignment

Time: 20 Minutes

From the point of view of the *Campaign to Improve Foods Sold Outside School Meal Programs*, prepare a strategy chart showing how you would set up a campaign to get Congressman Charles to vote "Yes" on the amendment to the Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act. Put the chart on easel paper one column to a sheet. Add a four month time line. Choose someone to present it to the whole group.

If you need additional information you may pretend you did the research and make it up. Just keep it within the realm of the possible and plausible.

Notes

Coalition Exercise

Federal

Reauthorization Of The Childhood Nutrition Act

Overview Participants practice evaluating possible coalition partners to work together on a federal issue.

Time Total: 30 minutes

- Exercise: 20 minutes
- Debrief: 10 minutes

Background

In the campaign to pass the Reauthorization of the Childhood Nutrition Act, the National PTA has asked your County Council to get Congressman Ethan Charles to vote “YES” on an amendment to include a minimum federal protective nutrition standard for foods sold outside of school meals. PTA leaders met with Rep. Charles and asked him to vote for the amendment and the reauthorization. Rep. Charles was quite friendly. He said that he totally respected the PTA and all its good work but thinks that trying to “regulate what is in a school vending machine is just not the role of the federal government.” Your PTA has decided that to win it must form a coalition. You are considering asking the following groups to join:

1. The County Medical Association
2. The Interfaith Committee
3. Local 123 of the State Education Association
4. The County Branch of the NAACP

Coalition Exercise

Federal

Assignment

You have 20 minutes to answer the questions below. From the perspective of the newly formed Coalition, consider why the group that you have been assigned (one of the four above) would want to be a part of the coalition, and the resources and liabilities they would bring to the coalition. Choose one person to record the answers on easel paper and present them to the larger group.

1. Why would the organization be interested in joining the Coalition?
2. What might prevent the organization from joining the Coalition?
3. What resources could the organization bring to the Coalition?
4. What liabilities might the organization bring to the Coalition?
5. Who would you contact? Who from the PTA should make the contact?

NOTE: Do not role play the planning meeting. Answer the questions from the perspective of the PTA County Council.

Media Exercise

Federal

Reauthorization Of The Childhood Nutrition Act

Overview Participants practice focusing their message in the face of questions from the media.

Time Total: 30 minutes

- Exercise: 20 minutes
- Debrief: 10 minutes

Background

Everyone will use the same scenario below, but each person will be assigned to do EITHER Exercise 1 OR Exercise 2. Everyone will have fifteen minutes to prepare, and then we will begin the interviews!

You are a leader of the PTA County Council in the district of Congressman Ethan Charles, working to get federal nutrition standards for competitive foods. Your PTA unit met with Rep. Ethan Charles at his district office to ask him to vote yes for nutrition standards. He says that he needs more time to study the issue; he is reluctant to have the Federal government tell children and their parents and their local schools what to do. The actual vote is still a month away.

Media Exercise

Federal

Assignment

EXERCISE 1

As you leave the district office building, a reporter thrusts a microphone at you and asks for a comment.

What will you say? What is the main point you want to make? How will you respond to questions? Remember that your time with the reporter is likely to be very brief! If you appear on the evening news program, it is not likely to be more than a 15-second clip.

EXERCISE 2

The morning after your meeting with Rep. Charles, you and three or four other parents are on a public affairs talk show on the local public radio station.

The President of the Snack Food Association was on just before you, and he said that they are being blamed, when they are doing everything they can to produce healthy snacks. Besides, it is up to parents to teach their children what to eat. The money from the soda machines pays for lots of extras at local schools, like uniforms for sports teams. What will you say? What are your main points? How will you handle questions? Your segment on the show will last ten minutes.

Meetings Exercise

Federal

The PTA County Council Meets With Congressman Ethan Charles

Overview Participants practice winning the support of an elected official.

Time Total: 30 minutes

- Exercise: 20 minutes
- Debrief: 10 minutes

Background

The County Council and its coalition partners have been conducting a campaign to amend and pass the Reauthorization of the Childhood Nutrition Act. At a recent meeting with PTA members, Rep. Charles said even if he voted for the Reauthorization Act he is concerned that the amendment to regulate competitive foods would be an example of government getting involved in something in which it should not be involved. He repeated the comment he made recently on a radio show that parents should be teaching their children how to make nutritious choices.

While Rep. Charles has been indicating that he will not vote for the amendment, you have heard that he is really worried about his upcoming election. He has said that he has to pay attention to Libertarians in the district as he thinks they were the margin of victory in his election. He has agreed to meet with a delegation from the PTA and others in the coalition to discuss the issue. Charles is very concerned about her next race, which is in November. You have been informed that the vote on the amendment will take place in one month.

Assignment

You have 20 minutes to plan your meeting with Rep. Charles who has agreed to meet in his district office in two weeks. Determine whom you will send from the coalition and who will be the spokespeople at the meeting. What power do you have over Rep. Charles?

Use the *Checklist For Planning A Meeting With An Official* to help your preparation.

After planning, you will have a mock meeting with Rep Charles in which you must convince him that he has more to gain by supporting the PTA and its allies and voting for the amendment.

If there is information you need but don't have, pretend you did the research and make it up. But keep it within the realm of the possible.

Notes