

Strategy Exercise

State

The Campaign To Invest In New Leif's Children

Overview Participants practice creating a strategy chart for an issue advocacy campaign using a hypothetical scenario involving an issue before the state legislature.

Time Total: 30 minutes

- Exercise: 20 minutes
- Debrief: 10 minutes

Background

New Leif is a mythical state in the United States named after the Norse explorer Leif Erickson. Like most states it has been hit hard by the current recession. Over the last three years, the State Legislature has repeatedly cut the education budget. It is January and the legislature has proposed cutting \$2 billion more from the state budget. The legislature will be voting on the cuts in April.

All 59 school districts in the state have been affected by the cuts, which have reached directly into the classroom (e.g. cuts in staffing including teachers, teacher's aides, and hall monitors; enrichment programs including music, art, field trips, etc; transportation; health and nutrition programs; summer and after school programs).

Currently, New Leif is near the bottom of the ladder in funding education and children's services. The New Leif State PTA is concerned that further cuts will continue to erode the already lean budget for education. The failure of the Legislature to act on a long-term solution to identify a stable source of funding for education will continue the downward spiral, making it even more difficult to recover lost ground.

At its last convention, the New Leif State PTA voted to develop a statewide campaign to "Invest in New Leif's Children" and stop the cuts to this year's budget. The PTA is also calling for the legislature to develop a plan for a long-term solution to education funding. The PTA has assumed a leadership role in coordinating the campaign. They have succeeded in getting the New Leif Education Association (the teachers' union) and the State School Board Association to join the campaign and are working on getting more organizations to join. While all PTA units have been asked to pressure their legislators, the State PTA has done an analysis of the Legislature and targeted some key districts where more intense pressure will be necessary.

The NLPTA knows that to be successful it must demonstrate and unleash the power of their grassroots membership and organize others to participate in the campaign. They want to use this campaign to build the organization and develop a model advocacy

infrastructure that can be used for other issues. In so doing; they also want to increase the power and membership of the PTA so that they are a force to be reckoned with in the state.

This week, your PTA County Council told you that your State Senator, Olivia Rosten, is a key target. Your unit is in the Fremont School District, which lies in Assembly District 13. The Fremont School District has ten K-6 elementary schools and three junior high schools. You have been asked to take the lead in coordinating the campaign in Assembly District 13.

State Senator Olivia Rosten

Your immediate task is to plan a campaign to get Republican Senator Olivia Rosten to oppose the state budget cuts. Rosten is a career politician. She was elected to the Assembly in 1990 and was reelected thereafter until she resigned to run for the State Senate in 1998. She has been reelected every term since then. Her committee assignments include: Budget, Human Services & Aging, Health & Education, Utilities, and Military & Veterans Affairs. She has a BA in Anthropology from the state university, has six grandchildren, and once worked as the Director of Community Services for a local hospital.

Results of Olivia Rosten's last election:

Republican Incumbent Rosten.....	28,434
Democratic Candidate.....	24,044
Libertarian Candidate.....	816

Senators serve staggered four-year terms. Half the Senate is up for election every two years. Assembly members serve two-year terms and the whole assembly is up for election each time. Rosten had no primary opposition in the last election. She is up for reelection this year.

The Fifth District

Rosten's Fifth District takes in a portion of the state's largest city; it then goes straight south to include parts of two wealthy suburban counties. The Senate district includes all parts of three Assembly districts, the 13th 14th and 15th. Fremont School District lies in Assembly District 13.

District #	Population	White	Black	Asian	American Indian	Hawaiian Pacific	Latino	Other
SD- 5	143,690	102,229	32,555	3,051	1,010	78	4,088	291
AD-13	49,241	25,668	19,863	1,349	332	27	1,568	147
AD-14	47,275	38,939	6,105	1,104	191	34	813	68
AD-15	47,174	37,622	6,587	598	487	17	1,707	76

Voting Figures for the State Assembly races in Senate District 5:

- # 13 Incumbent Dem = 20,080. Unopposed.
- # 14 Incumbent Rep = 20,268. Unopposed.
- # 15 Incumbent Dem = 15,489. Libertarian = 2,174. (No Republican ran.)

In an initial discussion with your County Council staff, Sen. Rosten said that she was inclined to support the cuts as the state "...just has no more money"! Sen. Rosten went on to say that she respects the PTA and cares deeply about all children, but has a responsibility to see that the state has a balanced budget. She also said that she has been hearing from many people in her district that taxes are way out of control and they want tax cuts.

Assignment

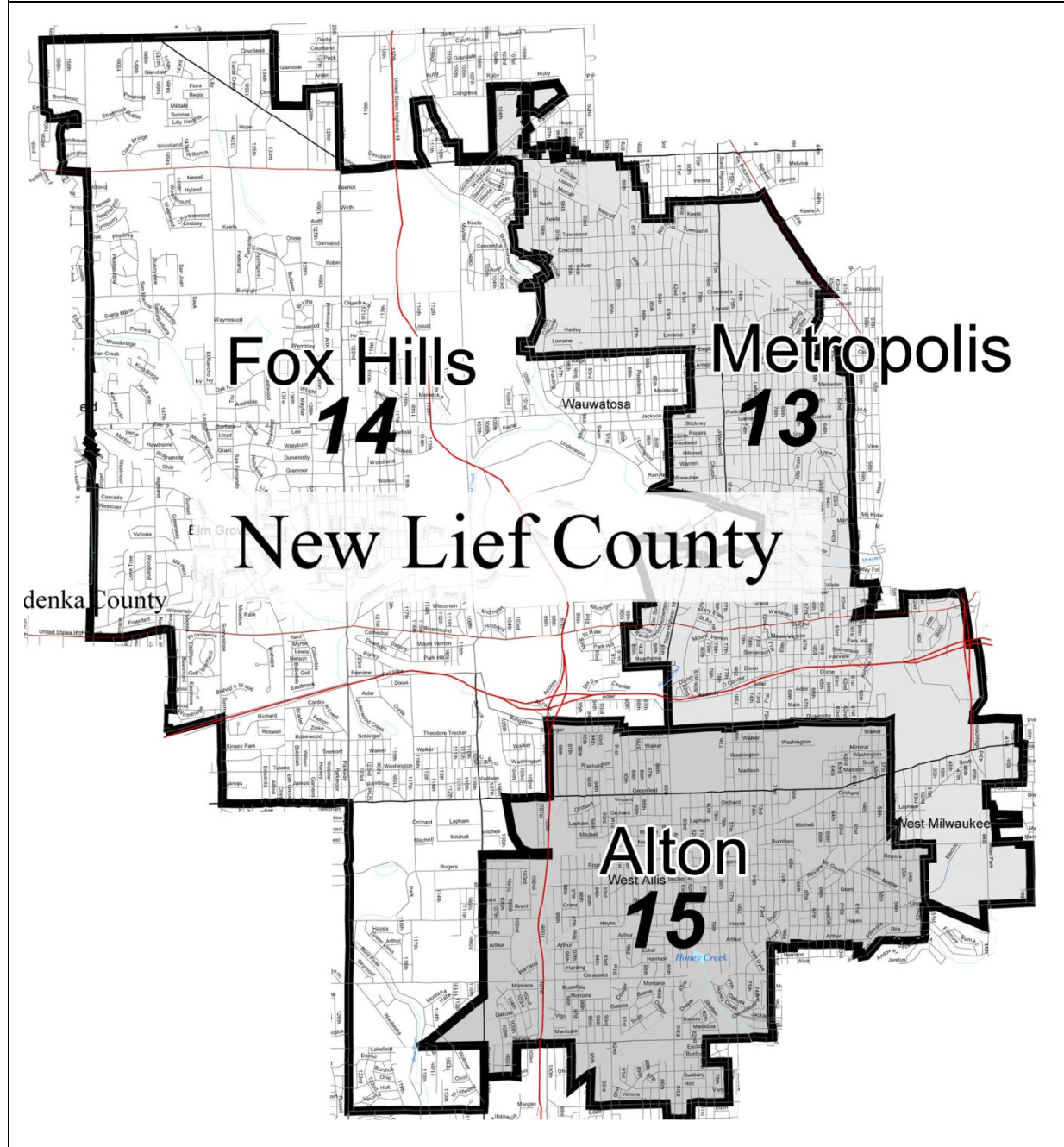
Time: 20 Minutes

Make a strategy chart for a campaign to get Sen. Rosten to agree to vote against the budget cuts. Choose one person to present the chart to the whole group. You can make up any information you need as long as it is realistic and probable. For your Organizational Considerations column, make an educated guess about the actual budget, staffing, desired outcomes and internal problems of the campaign based on the situation in your own state/district. Consider resources that are available to you from all levels of the PTA.

Choose someone to lead your group through the chart. Write the chart on easel paper with one column on each sheet. The chart should be in presented by the person who wrote it. (It is easier for the presenter to read his/her own handwriting.)

New Lief —Senate District 5

Assembly Districts: Metropolis — 13, Fox Hills — 14, Alton — 15



Coalition Exercise

State

Fremont PTAs Organize A Coalition

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

Time Total: 30 minutes

- Exercise: 20 minutes
- Debrief: 10 minutes

Background

In the campaign to stop the \$2 billion in cuts to the state budget, the New Leif PTA has asked PTA units that have not received a commitment from their State Senator to vote against the cuts to invite other organizations into the campaign to increase their power. A few members from PTAs in Fremont met with Sen. Rosten and asked her to vote against the cuts. Sen. Rosten says that she is getting a lot of pressure from some of her constituents to vote for the cuts. Several of the Fremont PTAs have decided that to win they must form a coalition. In addition to recruiting all the PTAs in the area, you are considering asking the following groups to join the coalition:

1. The Fremont Retail Merchant Association
2. The Fremont chapter of the State Senior Citizen Federation
3. The Fremont Interfaith Committee
4. The Fremont branch of the NAACP

Coalition Exercise

State

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 Fremont PTAs.

Media Exercise

State

Media And Campaign To Invest In New Leif's Children

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 in the Fremont School District, working to save school funding which the state legislature is proposing to cut. Your PTA unit and others brought a large group of parents to the State Capitol to talk with State Senator Olivia Rosten, as a part of a much larger rally organized by the New Leif State PTA and its allies. Your PTA Unit President was one of the speakers at the rally on the Capitol steps, and then a delegation from your Unit went to Sen. Rosten's office and met with her. She listened, but refused to commit to vote against the funding cuts. She is still undecided, she says; she wants to cast a vote that will be fiscally responsible and balance the state budget. The actual vote is still a month away.

Media Exercise

State

Assignment

EXERCISE 1

As you leave the state capitol 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 the rally and meeting with Sen. Rosten, you and three or four other parents are on a public affairs talk show on the local public radio station.

The State Senate Finance Committee Chairman was on just before you, and he said that there simply is not enough money. 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

State

The Fremont PTA Meets With Senator Olivia Rosten

Overview Participants practice winning the support of an elected official.

Time Total: 30 minutes

- Exercise: 20 minutes
- Debrief: 10 minutes

Background

The Fremont PTA and its coalition partners have been conducting a campaign to stop the funding cuts to public schools in the state. At a recent meeting with a few PTA members Sen. Rosten refused to take a position on the funding cuts. She claims she is torn about what to do. She wants to uphold her reputation for being fiscally responsible.

Sen. Olivia Rosten is truly undecided. She has agreed to meet with a delegation from the Campaign to discuss the issue. Rosten is very concerned about her next race, which is in November. You have been informed that the vote will take place in one month.

Assignment

You have 20 minutes to plan your meeting with State Senator Rosten who has agreed to meet in her 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 Sen. Rosten?

Use the Checklist For Planning A Meeting With An Official pages of this handout to help your preparation.

After planning, you will have a mock meeting with Sen. Rosten in which you must convince her that she has more to gain by supporting the PTA and its allies and opposing the funding cuts.

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