Public Policy Advocacy for the 2015-2016 Legislative Session

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Dominic W. Holt, MSW, MFA
Public Policy & Communications Coordinator
Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault
DISCLAIMER

This presentation provides legal information only and does not constitute legal advice. No agency should adopt any of the policies and procedures included here without first obtaining approval from the appropriate decision-makers, which could include a Board of Directors or an agency attorney.
The Political Context

- Some analysts say the governor’s run for the presidency has helped motivate the many budget cuts he recently proposed in his budget.
  - For example, among other cuts, he has proposed a $300 million cut to the UW system.
- The 2014 elections favored Republicans, who strengthened their majority in the legislature.
  - They continue to control both the senate and the assembly.
- Many in the majority party favor less government and more budget cuts.
- Add this to the expected $2.2 billion structural shortfall in the state budget, and we have a significant downward pressure on the state budget all around.

The Legislative Landscape

- In terms of legislation related to sexual violence, there has already been significant movement on a so-called “up-skirting” bill.
  - An attempt to bring the law up-to-date with new technology and how that technology applies to sexual violence.
  - Among other things, makes it a crime to essentially take images of parts of the body that are clothed merely by undergarments.
  - Started quickly and passed the assembly.
  - It has now slowed down in the Senate (AB8/SB4).
- There’s also continued interest in the legislature on mental health reforms and human trafficking.
• WCASA heard members’ requests for increased communication and transparency loud and clear.

• To help respond to those concerns, in October the public policy team invited members to serve on a membership-based public policy advisory committee.

• In addition, we now use a highly transparent agenda-setting process, described in the public policy agenda itself.

• Late last fall, the advisory committee completed a survey, which helped inform our new public policy agenda.

• In December, the committee held a kickoff call in which we reviewed survey results, the committee’s roles and opportunities, and the new agenda for the new legislative session.

• In general, we hope that WCASA and the advisory committee work together to:
  • Facilitate two-way communication between WCASA and members.
  • Increase members’ collaboration with WCASA on engaging the media and state lawmakers.
  • Identify and address barriers members experience regarding policy advocacy.
  • Inform the public policy work of the coalition.
• The public policy agenda is broken up into different tiers.
  • Please refer to the agenda for detailed descriptions and explanations of each tier.
• Tier 1 issues are those in which WCASA works to become the recognized leader in the state.
• WCASA considers these issues the highest priority of the public policy and communications coordinator.
• We will ask WCASA members to focus much of their advocacy on these top priorities, which include:
  • Increase funding for the Sexual Assault Victim Services grant program, referred to as SAVS.
  • Victim accompaniment legislation.
    • We are already meeting with legislators and agency officials on this matter.
  • Public reporting of data.
    • We are advocating for an annual public reporting system of data related to sexual assaults, such as reporting sexual assaults to law enforcement, arrests, referrals for prosecution, and, among other possibilities, convictions.
• The governor has proposed level/flat funding SAVS at $2 million annually.
• WCASA is advocating that the state fund SAVS at $4 million annually.
• The governor’s proposal now goes to the legislature’s Joint Finance Committee for consideration.
• We will be working with you on encouraging the Joint Finance Committee to increase funding for the SAVS grant program.
• “Help Us Prevent Rape: WCASA’s Budget Request (2015-2017)” is the handout document WCASA would like to share with all members of the Joint Finance Committee.
  o It lays out our argument for increased funding for SAVS.
JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE

- Sen. Darling (Co-Chair) (R - River Hills)
- Rep. Nygren (Co-Chair) (R - Marinette)
- Rep. Kooyenga (Vice-Chair) (R - Brookfield)
- Sen. Olsen (Vice-Chair) (R - Ripon)
- Sen. Harsdorf (R - River Falls)
- Sen. Vukmir (R - Wauwatosa)
- Sen. Tiffany (R - Hazelhurst)
- Sen. Marklein (R - Spring Green)
- Sen. L. Taylor (D - Milwaukee)
- Sen. Erpenbach (D - Middleton)
- Rep. Loudenbeck (R - Clinton)
- Rep. Knudson (R - Hudson)
- Rep. Schraa (R - Oshkosh)
- Rep. Czaja (R - Irma)
- Rep. C. Taylor (D - Madison)
- Rep. Hintz (D - Oshkosh)
• Go here to find out who represents you.
• You should have one state senator and one state representative/assembly-person.
### POLL RESULTS

1. **What kinds of policy advocacy activities (with legislators and the media) have you done?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>→ Holding Other Meetings with Lawmakers or Their Staff</td>
<td>75.00%</td>
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<tr>
<td>→ Calling Your Lawmakers</td>
<td>75.00%</td>
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<tr>
<td>→ Proactively Reaching out to Reporters</td>
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<tr>
<td>→ Participating in Legislative Advocacy Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>→ Writing Constituent Letters</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
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<tr>
<td>→ Speaking at Listening Sessions / Town Halls</td>
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<tr>
<td>→ Planning Social Media Campaigns</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
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<tr>
<td>→ Building Relationships with Reporters</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
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<tr>
<td>→ Touring Lawmakers Through Your Agency</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
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<td>→ Testifying at Hearings</td>
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<tr>
<td>→ Drafting and Disseminating Press Releases, Letters to the Editor, and Op-Eds (Opinion Articles)</td>
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<td>→ Hosting Press Conferences / Media Events</td>
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<tr>
<td>→ Giving Interviews</td>
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Total Respondents: 4
1. **What kinds of training or resources would you find most useful in these regards?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparing for and Holding Effective Meetings with Legislators or Their Staff</td>
<td>80.00%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Speaking at Listening Sessions / Town Halls</td>
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<tr>
<td>Calling Your Lawmakers</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
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<td>Testifying at Hearings</td>
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<td>Planning Social Media Campaigns</td>
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<td>Hosting Press Conferences / Media Events</td>
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<td>Writing Constituent Letters</td>
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<tr>
<td>Granting and Managing Interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>Building Relationships with Reporters</td>
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<tr>
<td>Touring Lawmakers Through Your Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drafting and Disseminating Press Releases, Letters to the Editor, and Op-Eds (Opinion Articles)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proactively Reaching out to Reporters</td>
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</table>

Total Respondents: 5
What kinds of challenges have you or your staff encountered when accompanying victims through the medical and criminal justice systems?

- We haven't really had any experience with this yet we just started 3 months ago... but hope to have some experience very soon.
- LE are not engaged and not calling for advocate response. Victims have had to travel to find a SANE.
- Not being called until the interview is almost complete. Not being called at all.
The two primary ways of influencing public policy are by communicating with lawmakers and their staff, and by communicating with and through the media to affect the public debate.

Now, why you?

- Public policy significantly influences the work we do in the anti-sexual violence movement.
- It shapes victim rights laws, funding for victim services, and how our communities respond to offenders.
- When the voices of survivors, advocates, service providers, and allies are not heard, the quality of our sexual assault laws and policies suffer.
- Public policy makers need informed input from you in order to develop and implement sound sexual assault policies.
- Your involvement in policy advocacy is a key factor as to whether or not our communities have laws and policies that treat victims with dignity, and prioritize and value the vital roles played by service providers.
Ways to engage lawmakers include the following:

- Participating in our Legislative Advocacy Day. Please save the date and attend – March 25.
- Conducting other Capitol or in-district meetings with your lawmakers.
- Testifying at hearings.
- Speaking at listening sessions or town halls in your local areas.

The Joint Finance Committee plans to hold numerous hearings again this legislative session (details soon to follow).

- In mid-March, the committee says it is planning to have a hearing in Fox Valley, in Southeast Wisconsin, Southwest Wisconsin, and Northern Wisconsin.
- In April, the committee anticipates holding hearings in Madison.
- We would like to assist individuals and
organizations interested in speaking at any of these events, so please let us know.
COMMUNICATING WITH LAWMAKERS

• How You Can Engage Lawmakers (continued)
  ▶ Lawmakers’ Tours of Your Agency
  ▶ Responding to Action Alerts:
    ▶ Letter Writing
    ▶ Phone Calls
    ▶ Emails
    ▶ Social Media Campaigns

• More ways to engage lawmakers include:
  • Inviting lawmakers to tour your agency.
  • Responding to our action alerts, leveraging
    • Letter writing
    • Calls
    • Email
    • Social media.
• You can also influence public policy by communicating with and through the media.
• This can significantly impact the public debate on public policy matters.
• In addition, legislators and their staff often monitor their home newspapers and other media outlets concerning their pet issues and legislation or policy they are working on.
• When thinking about the media, it’s important to:
  • try to generate positive media coverage referred to as “earned media”
  • and to try to respond quickly and effectively to media requests.
Some ways of achieving positive media coverage of a public policy priority include:

- Drafting and disseminating press releases, letters to the editor, and op-eds.
- Building relationships with reporters.
  - Invite them to tour your agency, interview the Executive Director on pertinent issues in the headlines, etc.
- Hosting press conferences and other media events.
- Pitching to reporters – proactively contacting reporters, and encouraging them to write about your policy priorities.
COMMUNICATING WITH THE MEDIA

- Responding Effectively to Media Requests
  - Granting and Managing Interviews
  - Providing Other Resources When an Interview Is Not Possible or Otherwise Not in Your Best Interest
Lobbying is a bit of a gray area, as federal and state rules regarding lobbying are complex.

In general, nonprofits can lobby. But there are limitations, so read the fine print.

It is up to each organization to know what your grants say regarding lobbying, to consult these resources and an attorney if necessary, and to decide what lobbying related activities you will pursue.
FOR MORE INFORMATION

- WCASA Webinars on the Legislative Process
- WCASA State Public Policy Page
- Wisconsin Legislature
CONTACT INFORMATION

Dominic W. Holt, M.S.W., M.F.A.
Public Policy & Communications Coordinator
Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault
2801 West Beltline Highway, Suite 202
Madison, WI 53713
Telephone: 608-257-1516 ext. 113
Email: dominich@wcasa.org
Fax: 608-257-2150
Website: http://www.wcasa.org
https://www.facebook.com/wcasa
https://twitter.com/wcasa_org