Impactful Citizen Lobbying
PA Solar Congress
February 24, 2019
Our Theory of Change

Go solar.

Join together.

Fight for our energy rights.
The role of citizen lobbyists in shaping policy

People who have a stake in the clean energy economy are highly motivated and compelling advocates for clean energy policies.
Bringing solar homeowners’ unique perspective to lobby for pro-solar policies is a key part of our mission.
Citizen Lobbying

• What is Lobbying?
  – getting what you want by advocating to the people with the power to give it to you.

• Does grassroots lobbying work?
  – YES!
A bill = proposed law

Assigned to committee which holds public hearings before voting on bill.

If bill passes through committee, it goes to the full legislative body for votes.

If approved, bill is sent to the Governor to sign.

If the Governor vetoes, legislators can vote again to override the veto.
Levels of citizen lobbying

- In-person meeting
- Testimony at Legislature
- Attend a lobbying event
- Personal phone call
- Personal email or letter
- “Clicktivism” or mass online action
Before Contacting Your Representatives

✓ Learn about their background, and solar and energy voting record (ask us).

✓ Prepare what you want to say, starting with your personal story about how the bill solves a problem or impacts your family, community, or business.

✓ Remember that your story will make a greater impact than presenting facts about the bill.
Tips when mailing or calling your representatives

✓ Address them by their proper title
  ✓ Representative Smith

✓ Identify yourself by:
  ✓ Name, Town, Profession and, if relevant to the issue, Organizational affiliation

✓ Identify the bill by number and title
Citizen Lobbying

✓ State how you would like your rep. to vote
  ✓ Explain how the bill would affect you, your family, business, and/or community.

✓ If the representative opposes
  ✓ Express disappointment
  ✓ Ask what info/questions they need to reconsider position and follow up ASAP with info (ask us for help)

✓ If representative supports
  ✓ Express gratitude and ask to co-sponsor bill and urge colleagues to support
More Tips

✓ Be politely assertive and use a professional tone. Try not to express anger or threaten.

✓ One of the goals of communicating is to build an ongoing and productive constituent-representative relationship.
Meeting in person with your representative is usually the most impactful way to lobby.

Request meeting (at least one week ahead) at their legislative office or in district.

If your legislator is not available, ask to meet with a staffer/legislative aide.
Preparing for the meeting

✓ To prepare, see previous suggestions for calling/emailing your representatives.

✓ Good idea to have a one-page talking points.

✓ Don’t bring a lot of written material to leave with the legislators; if you do, it should be no more than 1-2 pages.
During the Meeting

✔ Allow opportunities for legislators to speak about their positions and concerns.

✔ Take brief notes as long as it’s not distracting.

✔ If you don’t know the answer to a question...
  ✔ Say so, and offer to find the answer and provide it to the legislator later. (Ask us for help)

✔ Close meeting by thanking for the opportunity and say that you will send a follow-up email.
If your representative disagrees...

✓ Calmly express your disappointment and ask what kind of information would be needed for them to reconsider. Offer to send more information via email.

✓ Solar United Neighbors can assist you in obtaining this information.
After the meeting...

✓ Review/clarify your meeting notes

✓ Send follow-up email thanking them for the meeting
  ✓ Include any requested info
  ✓ Repeat your ask to support your position

✓ If your legislators say they will support
  ✓ Thank them, ask them to co-sponsor bill, and urge them to encourage their colleagues to follow suit.
Email testimony (1-2 pages) to the committee clerk, asking that your testimony be distributed to committee members.

Tell your personal story! The more specific, the better.

Oral testimony is usually restricted to 2-3 minutes.

Bring enough copies of your written testimony to pass out to committee members just before you speak.
Before you write your LTE, check the newspaper’s word count guidelines (usually around 150 words)

Identify the bill, explain why it’s important to you and your community, and call on your local legislators by name to support your position

It can also be helpful to tie your letter to an article the newspaper previously published
What's happening in Pennsylvania this year?

- **Community Solar – HB 531**
  - Status: waiting to be sent to committee
  - Strategies: target committee chair, get more co-sponsors, especially Republicans from Western PA, engage ag community

- **Updating the AEPS - ???**
  - Status: no bill yet, but our AEPS expires in 2021, solar industry will stall out if we don't update it soon
  - Strategies: make sure all state legislators feel pressure to set ambitious AEPS goals with a >8% solar carve-out

- **Nuclear bailout - ???**
  - Status: bill being drafted, may add nuclear to the AEPS
  - Strategies: make sure that whatever deal is reached, it protects ratepayers and does not undercut solar
Next steps

 ✓ Let us know if you need help connecting with your representatives (meeting, testimony, etc.)

 ✓ Look for forthcoming resources, including this slide presentation and a Citizen Lobbying Guide

 ✓ For help, email PAteam@solarunitedneighbors.org
Learn more at solarunitedneighbors.org

Thank You!