

# Expanding Our Influence: Building Legislative Relationships

Hicken Conservation Leadership Initiative

# UACD Resolution Process

- The resolutions process is how districts initiate policy discussions and help establish Association policy.
- Resolutions should address issues and call for action consistent with the conservation purposes of the Association.



# UACD Resolution Process – cont'd

- Standard resolutions may be introduced in 4 ways:
  - ▣ From a CD when approved by the district board
  - ▣ From a zone or Zone Executive Committee (ZEC) when approved by the districts in the zone
  - ▣ From the UACD Board of Directors or Executive Committee when approved by the officers
  - ▣ From an Association standing committee meeting when approved by the districts attending



# UACD Resolution Process – cont'd

- An emergency resolution may be introduced if it deals with pressing issues that have arisen after the deadline of a standard resolution.
- Emergency resolutions may be exempt from standing committee action and district level distribution as long as it:
  - ▣ Receives 2/3 majority approval vote of the UACD Board of Directors or the full assembly *and*
  - ▣ Is labeled as “emergency resolution” during annual meeting committee and floor action.

# Resolutions Committee

- ❑ The Resolutions Committee is made up of the Board of Directors. A chairman is designated by the Board.
- ❑ Standard resolutions are sent to all districts for review and study prior to the annual meeting.
- ❑ This committee will compile all resolutions for the annual meeting and floor action.



# Resolution Action at the Annual Meeting

- Resolutions are assigned to a standing committee to be considered at their meeting held during the annual convention.
- Sponsors of a resolution are expected to be present at the standing committee session in which their resolution is to be brought up for discussion and action.
- Standing committees forward resolutions considered, with their recommendations, for full association floor action during the business session of the Association annual meeting.

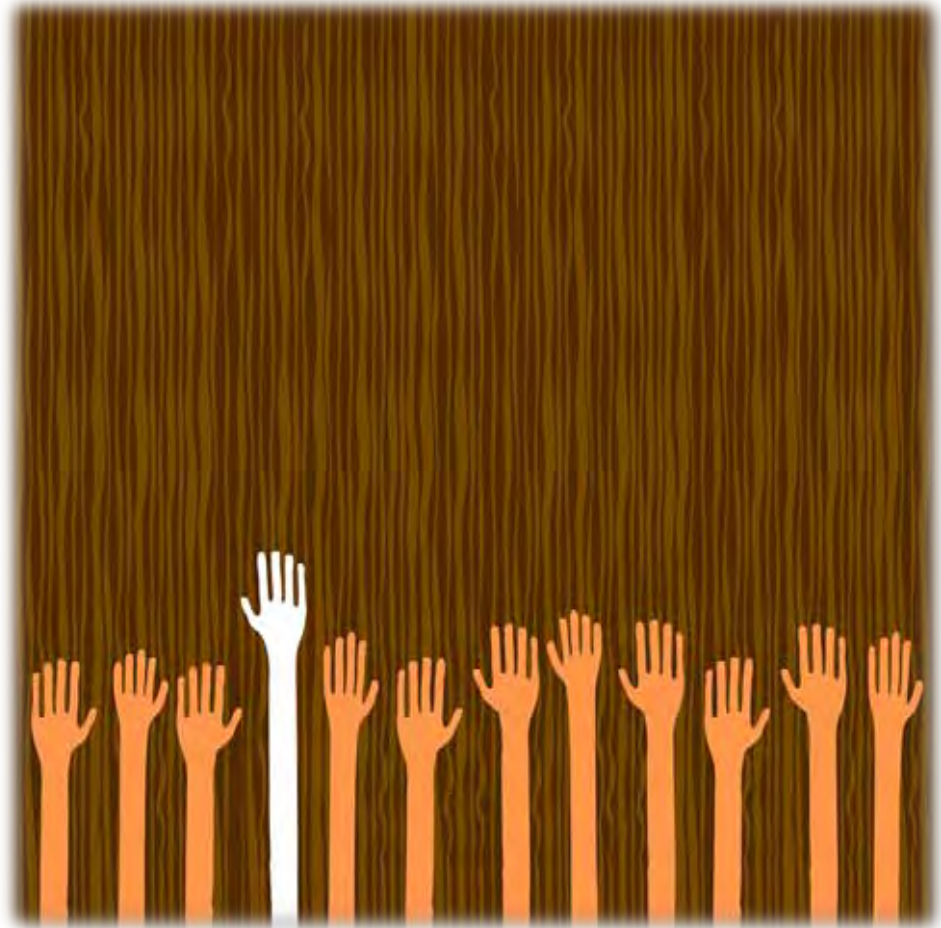
# Calling for a Vote on Resolutions

- If the Standing Committee or full assembly recommends the resolution, the chair will read and/or show the full resolution and then move for its adoption.
- Resolutions not recommended for adoption by a standing committee will have the title and action of the standing committee read to the full assembly.
  - **A vote of the full assembly is required to ratify the committee's action.**



# Calling for a Vote on Resolutions

- ❑ Acceptance of a resolution requires a simple majority of the voting delegates in attendance at the annual meeting.





# UACD Policy Follow-Up Action

- All resolutions adopted at the annual meeting become UACD policy.
  - ▣ All policy statements have a 3 year life.
  - ▣ After 3 years, the policy is reviewed again by the original standing committee.
    - The policy is extended for another 3 years, is amended or is retired.



# NACD Resolutions Process

## □ Origin & Submission of Resolutions

- In accordance with Section 13.20 of the *NACD Bylaws*, to be considered at an Annual Meeting any State Association or Region may file with the CEO of NACD, at least 30 days before the annual meeting of the Board of Directors, a copy of any resolution adopted at any annual or special meeting of such State Association or Region, which it wishes to have considered during the next Annual Meeting of the National Association.
- Resolutions submitted to the Board of Directors shall:
  - Be concerned with the conservation, development or management of natural resources;
  - Be of national or significant regional scope;
  - Propose new policy, alter existing policy, or reaffirm existing policy; and
  - Be written in brief and concise form (without “whereas”, etc.) and present the problem or issue and the action desired.

# Influencing the Legislative Process

- Conservation districts are directly affected by actions of federal, state and local legislators.
  - Sometimes there is a need for new legislation to handle a natural resource issue or concerns over funding for District and natural resource programs.
- Elected officials react to what they read, hear and especially to individuals they speak with.
  - It is necessary for CDs to take action to educate, inform and persuade elected officials.



# Influencing the Legislative Process – cont'd

- To build effective legislative relationships, CD supervisors should:
  - ▣ Be informed of issues affecting their district and its goals
  - ▣ Know their elected officials and other legislators who influence CD policy and funding
  - ▣ Be prepared to present the case for CD interests effectively
- To look up your legislators go to:
  - ▣ [www.le.state.ut.us](http://www.le.state.ut.us)
  - ▣ This site provides rosters for the Utah Senate and House of Representatives as well as access to committee membership, agendas, bills filed and their status.

# Communicating a Positive Message

- You and the legislators you deal with should:
  - ▣ Know that your issue or concern is always an affirmative one.
  - Consider yourself “pro” and not “anti”. Being “anti” on an issue is negative, defensive and reactive. Working from a “pro” stance makes it far easier to keep communication open and influence the process.
  - Look for the win-win solution.



# Communicating a Positive Message

- To be effective in influencing legislators, both positive thinking and positive actions are very important.
- People will listen when you are:
  - confident
  - know your issues
  - positive



# Build the Relationship Early

- You should build a relationship before you have need of your legislator's help.
- S/he is more likely to want to listen if they know who you are and about your CD's work.



# Build the Relationship Early

- Suggestions for Developing Early Relationships
  - ▣ Meet with your legislator to get acquainted.
  - ▣ Invite him or her to a CD meeting or special event.
    - Even though they may not attend, the invitation tells them who you are and that you are interested in them.
    - Legislators especially appreciate speaking to and interacting with their constituents.





# Participate in UACD & NACD Legislative Events

- UACD hosts an annual breakfast and morning at the Utah Legislature.
  - ▣ Gain hands-on experience at the Utah Capitol, meet your legislators, attend committee meetings and observe floor deliberations.
- Annually the Association, in partnership with NACD, visits Utah senators and representatives in Washington D.C.
  - ▣ Volunteer to attend.
    - Regularly the Association provides grants to help CD supervisors with the cost of registration and travel.

# Do Your Homework



Learn the message.

- ▣ Before contacting a legislator, take the time to read available background material on the bill or issue.
  - Know and study materials that support the Association's position.
  - Identify possible arguments against this position.
  - Be a credible spokesperson for your issue. Credibility is easily lost and rarely restored.

# Do Your Homework



- Learn about the legislators.
  - ▣ Who are your legislators?
  - ▣ How long has s/he been in office?
  - ▣ What committees does s/he sit on?
  - ▣ What kind of district does s/he represent?
  - ▣ Has s/he been supportive of conservation and agriculture issues in the past?

# Do Your Homework – cont'd

- Practice the message.
  - ▣ Specify a message for supporters.
  - ▣ Specify a message for opponents.
  - ▣ Rehearse the message in front of colleagues.
- It may be helpful to take a staff person such as your zone coordinator with you.
  - ▣ They are knowledgeable and could answer questions.
  - ▣ They are able to follow-up with further information, if requested by the legislator.



# Initiating Contact with Legislators

- The “scheduler” is the gatekeeper to elected officials.
  - ▣ Don't be offended if you speak or meet with a staffer rather than the Member.
  - ▣ Never underestimate the power of a staffer – s/he has the Member's ear frequently.
- Visit them in person, call, send an e-mail or a letter.
  - ▣ Identify yourself, get to the point immediately, ask for concrete action, and explain why you're asking for support.
- Follow up with a phone call and be flexible in arranging a time to meet.

# Personal Contact with Legislators

- When you introduce yourself, save time by making it clear who you are and what CD you are with.
- Do not “overkill” – stick to the message.
  - ▣ Most legislators have many demands on their time. Elaborate or long speeches will not be appreciated.
  - ▣ They want your well prepared facts and views presented in a straightforward manner.
- Leave a copy of your position or fact sheet with them to read over at a later time.
- Never make up answers – get back in touch with them when you know the correct answer.



# Personal Contact with Legislators – cont'd

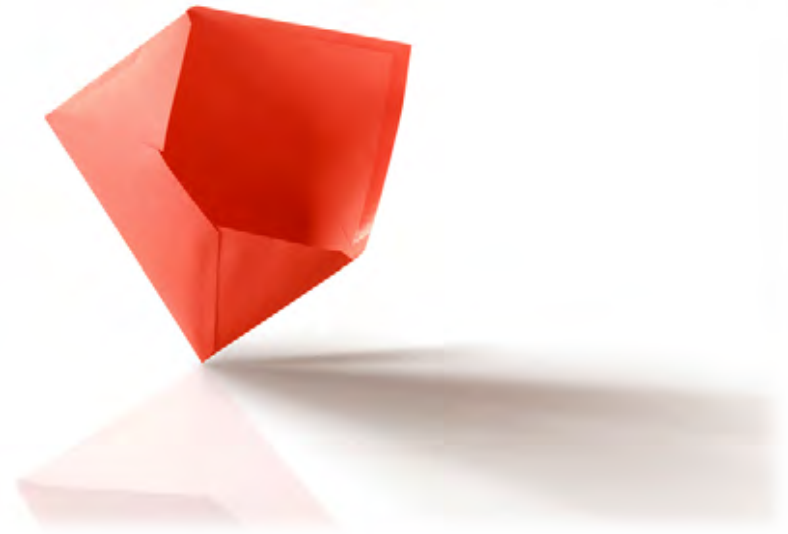
- Listen, listen, listen – especially with new legislators.
  - Seek a commitment – but don't demand one before the facts are in. Give your legislator a chance to examine all sides of an issue.
  - Thank them for their time.
  - Follow up with a thank you letter and continued updates.





# Written Communication with Legislators

- A personal letter or e-mail may be the most effective way of contacting your legislator.
- Address it properly. Know your legislator's full name and correct spelling.
  - ▣ For a Senator:  
The Honorable (full name)  
State (or United States) Senator  
Address  
\*\*\*\*\*  
Dear Senator (last name):
  - ▣ For a Representative:  
The Honorable (full name)  
State (or United States) Representative  
Address  
\*\*\*\*\*  
Dear Representative (last name):





# Written Communication – cont'd

- Always include your last name and address on the letter itself.
- Use your own words – not a form letter.
- Time the arrival of your letter while the bill or issue is still in committee and there is time for effective action.
- Know what you're writing about – identify the bill or issue of concern to you.
- Be reasonably brief – a single page is preferred by most legislators.
- Give reasons for your position.
  - ▣ Explain how the issue would affect you, your CD and the local community.
  - ▣ If you have specialized knowledge, share it with your legislator.

# Written Communication – cont'd

- Be constructive. If a bill deals with a problem you admit exists but you believe the bill is the wrong approach, explain what you believe to be the right approach.
- Write a letter of appreciation when you feel a legislator has done a good job. They are human too and seldom receive thank you letters of encouragement.
- Remember – on any one issue, even a few letters to one legislator can have an important impact.

# Invite Legislators to Your Meetings & Events

- District meetings can be just as effective as meetings at the Capitol.
- Invite elected officials to local meetings, field days and award ceremonies.
- Host public events for your elected officials.
- District staffers are just as important as legislative staff. Invite them to events too.
- Don't underestimate your ability to influence the future of agriculture programs!



# Building Relationships with County Officials



- ❑ Recognize their importance, responsibility, role and busy schedule.
- ❑ Give them an opportunity to speak – then listen.
- ❑ Invite to locally led conservation activities.
- ❑ Sell the importance of your conservation programs.
- ❑ Offer assistance in conservation matters.
- ❑ Maintain open communication throughout the year.

# National Legislative Process

Following is a very simple explanation of how a bill becomes a law:

- Introduction – Anyone can write a bill but only a member of Congress (House or Senate) can introduce the bill for consideration.
- Committee Consideration – All bills and resolutions are “referred” to one or more House or Senate committees according to their specific rules.
- Committee Action – The Committee considers the bill in detail. If they approve the bill, it moves on in the legislative process. Bills that fail to get committee action are said to have “died in committee.”
- Subcommittee Review – The committee sends some bills to a subcommittee for further study and public hearings.
- Mark Up – If the subcommittee decides to recommend a bill back to the full committee for approval, they make first make changes or amendments to it.
- Committee Action – Reporting a Bill – The full committee now reviews the deliberations and recommendations of the subcommittee. If the bill is to go forward, the full committee prepares and votes on its final recommendations to the House or Senate.
- Publication of Committee Report – Once a bill has been reported, a report about the bill is written and published. The report includes the purpose of the bill, its impact on existing laws, budgetary considerations and any new taxes that will be required by the bill.

# National Legislative Process cont'd

- Floor Action – Legislative Calendar – The bill will now be placed on the legislative calendar of the House or Senate and scheduled for “floor action” or debate before the full membership.
- Debate – Debate for and against the bill proceeds according to the rules of the House or Senate.
- Voting – Once debate has ended and any amendments to the bill have been approved, the full membership will vote for or against the bill.
- Bill Referred to Other Chamber – Bill approved by one “chamber” of Congress (House or Senate) are now sent to the other chamber where they will follow the same track of committee to debate to vote. The other chamber may approve, reject, ignore, or amend the bill.
- Conference Committee – If the second chamber to consider a bill changes it significantly, a “conference committee” made up of members of both chambers will be formed. They work to reconcile differences. If they cannot agree, the bill dies. If they agree on a compromise version of the bill they prepare a report detailing the changes. Both the House and Senate must approve the report or it will be sent back for further work.
- Final Action – Enrollment – Once both the House and Senate have approved the bill, it becomes “enrolled” and is sent to the President of the United States. The president may sign the bill into law. If opposed, he can veto it.
- Overriding the Veto – Congress can attempt to override the veto of a bill and force it into law, but this requires a 2/3 vote by a quorum of members of both the House and Senate.

*All information for the National Legislative Process came from and can be found at <http://usgovinfo.about.com>.*

# Additional Resources

Resource Available	Where to Find It
UACD Resolution Procedures <i>Conservation Policy tab</i> <i>Policy Positions link</i> <i>Click here to review Resolution Process</i>	<a href="http://www.uacd.org">www.uacd.org</a>
Roster for UT Senate & House of Reps Committee membership, agendas, bills filed Utah State Government – A Citizen's Guide <i>Click on the Citizen's Guide link on the left</i>	<a href="http://www.le.state.ut.us">www.le.state.ut.us</a>
How a Bill Becomes Law in Utah – written process in detail	<a href="http://www.utah.gov/capitolbuilding/utahlaw">www.utah.gov/capitolbuilding/utahlaw</a>
How a Bill Becomes Law – visual flow chart of the process	<a href="http://www.utah.gov/capitolbuilding/utahlaw2">www.utah.gov/capitolbuilding/utahlaw2</a>