

# Activating the Power of the Constituent

Hook, Line & Sinker

# Advocacy

Active support of an idea or cause, especially the act of pleading or arguing for something.

## Key components

Knowing your objective

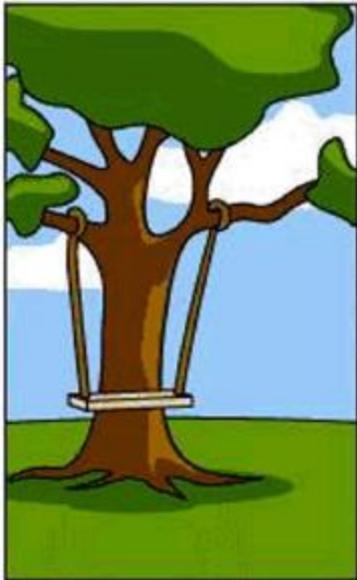
Understanding your audience

Crafting your message

Perfecting your delivery



What the legislation was intended to do



How the legislative committee understood it



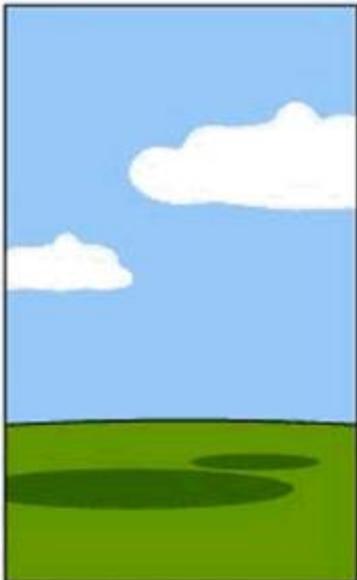
How it came out of committee



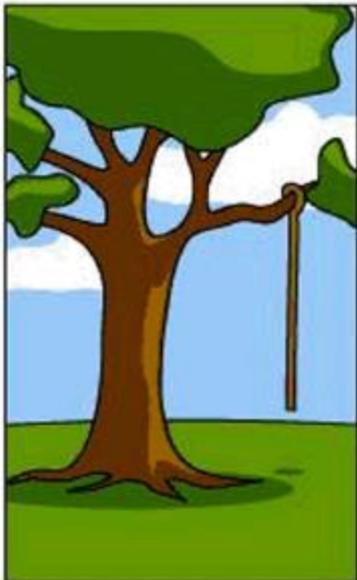
How it came out of the House floor debate



How it was described by the bill author to constituents



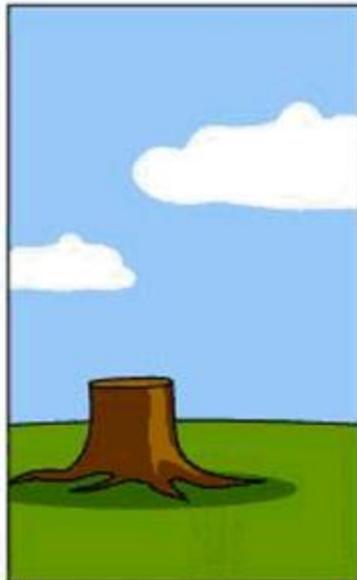
How it came out of the appropriations process



How it looked upon final passage



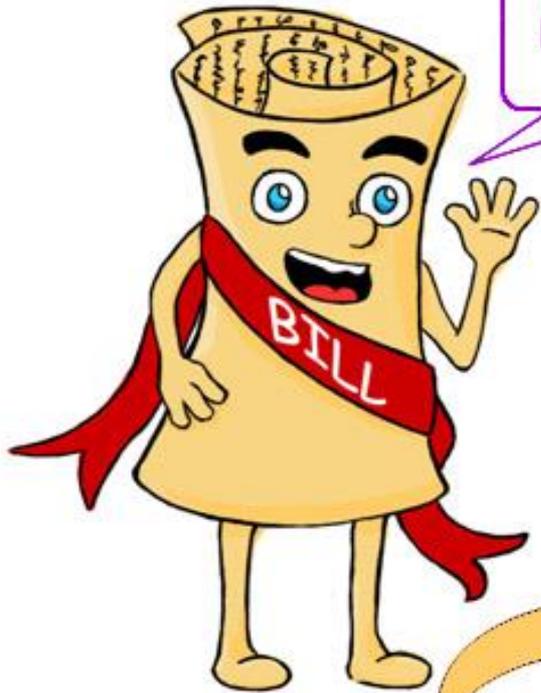
How it was portrayed by the media



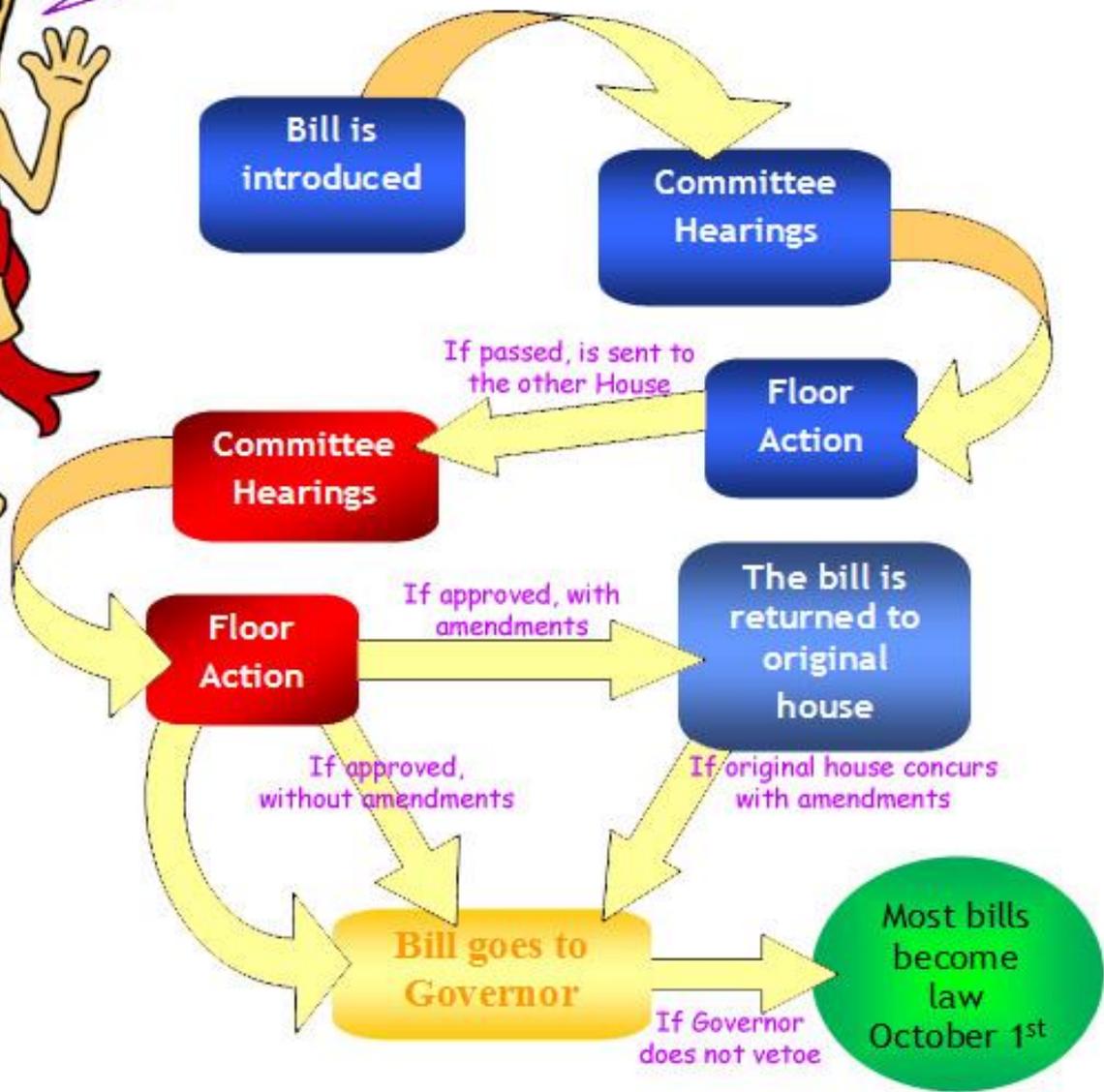
How it was viewed by the governor (and vetoed)



What was really needed



This is how a bill like me becomes a law!



# Advocacy Methods

- Writing letters or emails
  - Keep your letter/email to one topic.
  - Keep your letter/email short and to the point.
  - Let your lawmaker know how the issue affects you personally.
  - Let your lawmaker know you live and vote in the district.
- Making Phone calls
  - State that you are a constituent
  - Be brief, clear, and courteous
- Public Education: Presentations, Reports, Facts Sheets, Written Articles
- Meeting with policy makers and elected officials

# Advocacy vs Lobbying

- Advocacy: speaking out on issues or supporting a cause; OR everything lobbying is NOT.
- Lobbying: (test of 3) a communication with a legislator that expresses a view about specific legislation; and/or communication with the general public that expresses a view about specific legislation and includes a call to action.

# Meeting with Legislators

- Be persistent to secure a meeting with legislator.
  - If you can't meet with your legislative representative, send information (e.g., brochures, news articles, etc.) with a cover letter.
- Meet with your legislator IN the district (at his/her local office, workplace, or a public place)
  - especially if this is your first introduction [such visits are normally scheduled through staff].
  - Show that you care about your issue and public policy and offer to be a constituent contact for that legislator, on your issue.

# Before The Meeting...

Research the legislator's previous position on tobacco control and health issues.

Ask other supporters to join you, but no more than three or four at a time. If anyone in your coalition has a relationship with the legislator, bring him or her with you.

Choose one person to "chair" the meeting. Outline two or three main points to cover during the meeting, and make a list of priorities to cover.

Put together a small packet of 1-2 page fact sheets – make it brief or it won't be read.

# During the Meeting...

If the legislator cannot meet with you, or cancels the meeting, ask to meet with his or her staff. Legislative staff often have more time and a great deal of influence.

Start the meeting by thanking the legislator or staff person for his/her time, introduce yourself, and explain what you want to talk with him/her about. Make sure to cover your highest priority items first, in case you run out of time.

Bring a little information to leave, but not too much -- they won't read stacks of paper.

If you are asked something you don't know, don't improvise! Say that you will get the information to them after the meeting.

Always be polite and respectful, even when a legislator is being rude.

Ask the legislator for his or her support for tobacco control in general.

# Hook, Line & Sinker

**Hook: Introductions, remember geography is important, so mention where you live, so he/she can identify you as a constituent.**

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I live in your district, in (town or neighborhood). Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today!

**Line: This is your personal story (How has tobacco touched your life? This displays your emotional connection and puts a face on the issue)**

I'm a volunteer for Tobacco Free Missouri, and let me just take one minute to tell you why. (Tell your personal story QUICKLY.)

**Sinker: This is the "ask", or request of the legislator to support our issues.**

I have a packet of information for you with a lot more details, but I'd just like to touch on an issue that is one of our priorities.

# A good meeting...

- Gains helpful information on where the legislator sits on our issues (see report back form)
- Provides factual and persuasive information to the legislator
- Is a starting off point for a friendly and beneficial relationship in the future
- Is kept brief and cordial

# Become a Powerful Constituent

It doesn't stop with one meeting...

**Did you know it takes **seven** “touches” to form a trust and relationship with your legislator?**

It takes time and work to develop and maintain credibility with your legislator.

# Powerful & Persuasive

- Clip a newspaper article in which the legislator is mentioned, or even just an article that may be of interest to him/her, and mail it with a note that you noticed it and wanted to provide a copy.
- Sign up at the legislator's website or office to receive newsletters, emails etc. and periodically respond to them with questions, thanks, or general interest.

# Powerful & Persuasive

- Respond to action alerts by contacting your legislator before committee or floor votes.
- Attend a town hall meeting or community activity that the legislator is hosting or at which he/she will have a role – check his or her web site to find such listings. Be sure to make a personal contact while there.

# Powerful & Persuasive

- [For legislators with capitol and/or district office staff]  
Get to know the legislator's staff person. Being friendly and helpful, and recognizing staff's importance as a gatekeeper and influencer, goes a long way towards you becoming a key constituent for your legislator.
- Make a thank-you call or send a note when the legislator takes an action that you like (even if it's not related to your issue and/or even if you generally disagree with your legislator on issues – look for something on which you have common ground).

# Powerful & Persuasive

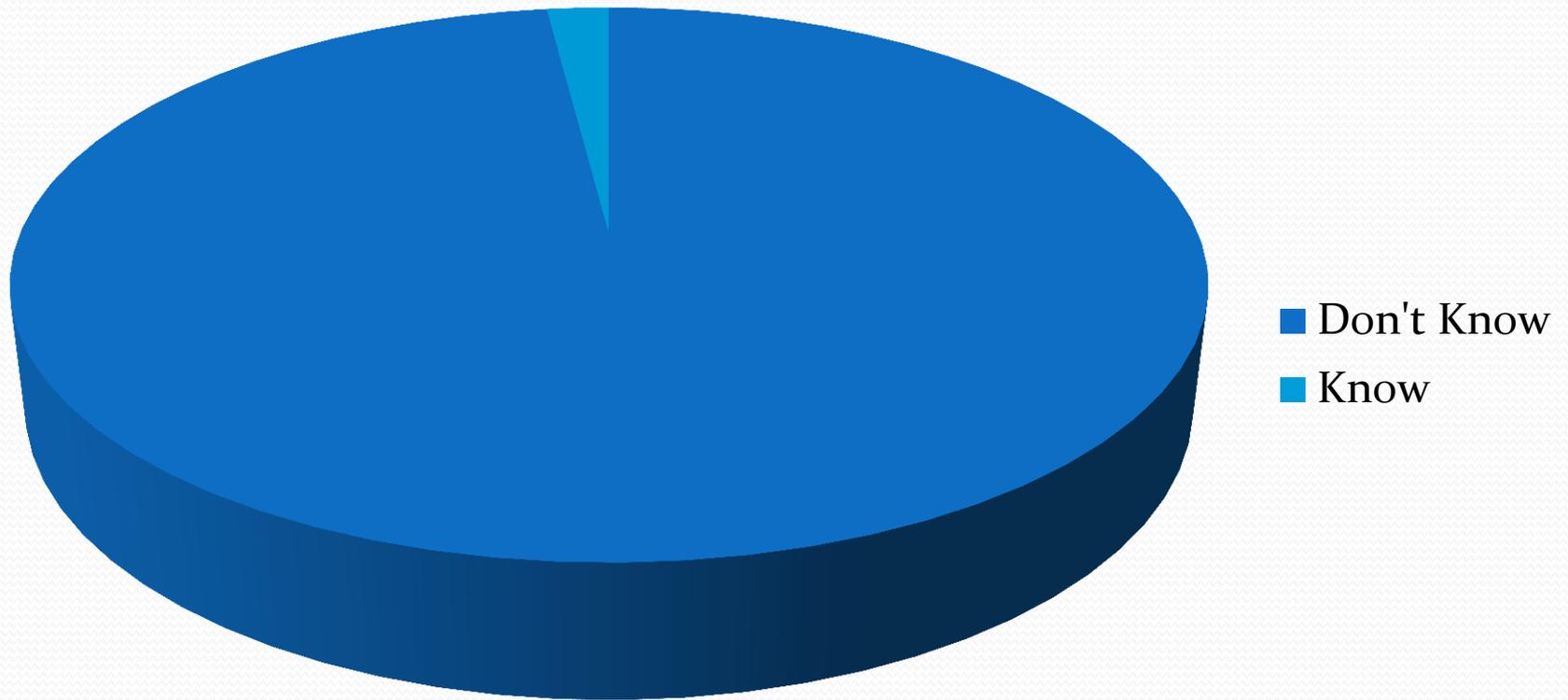
- In coordination with your local staff, invite your legislator to participate in local events or other activities.
- When possible, find ways to make your legislator look good in front of constituents. If you are involved in a community group that needs a speaker, offer the opportunity to your legislator. Send a letter to the editor when he/she has done something you think the public will like. Etc.

# Powerful & Persuasive

- Meet with your legislator during lobby day or at other organized activities focused on your issue.
- Send a birthday and/or holiday card to your legislator, with a short personal note of thanks for service to the district.
- If you are so inclined, do a little volunteer work for your legislator's re-election campaign or write a check to support it. Some fundraisers are low-dollar and easily accessible for networking.

# Reality vs. Goal

MO Legislators' Tobacco Control Knowledge



# How Do We Change This?

- "The Master Settlement Agreement money already goes to tobacco"
- "Our tobacco tax is high enough"
- "Alcohol kills more people than smoking"
- "Smoking bans just take away rights"
- "Tobacco isn't that big of a health problem"
- "Don't we already help people quit smoking?"
- "Secondhand smoke isn't dangerous"

# Change Is Only Possible With You

- 163 House members; 34 Senators
- Thousands of bills each session

How Can We Reach Them All With Our Message?

How Will Legislators Know About the Burden of Tobacco in Missouri?

How Can We Find Champions for Our Issues?

# Takeaways

- Advocacy is the only way the necessary policy changes will happen
- Advocacy requires you doing your part
- Legislators need education on tobacco
- To gain forward movement in Missouri we need to build a statewide network of ambassadors to reach them all and make tobacco control advocacy a year round effort



**Questions?**