Communicating with Congress: The Why and the How

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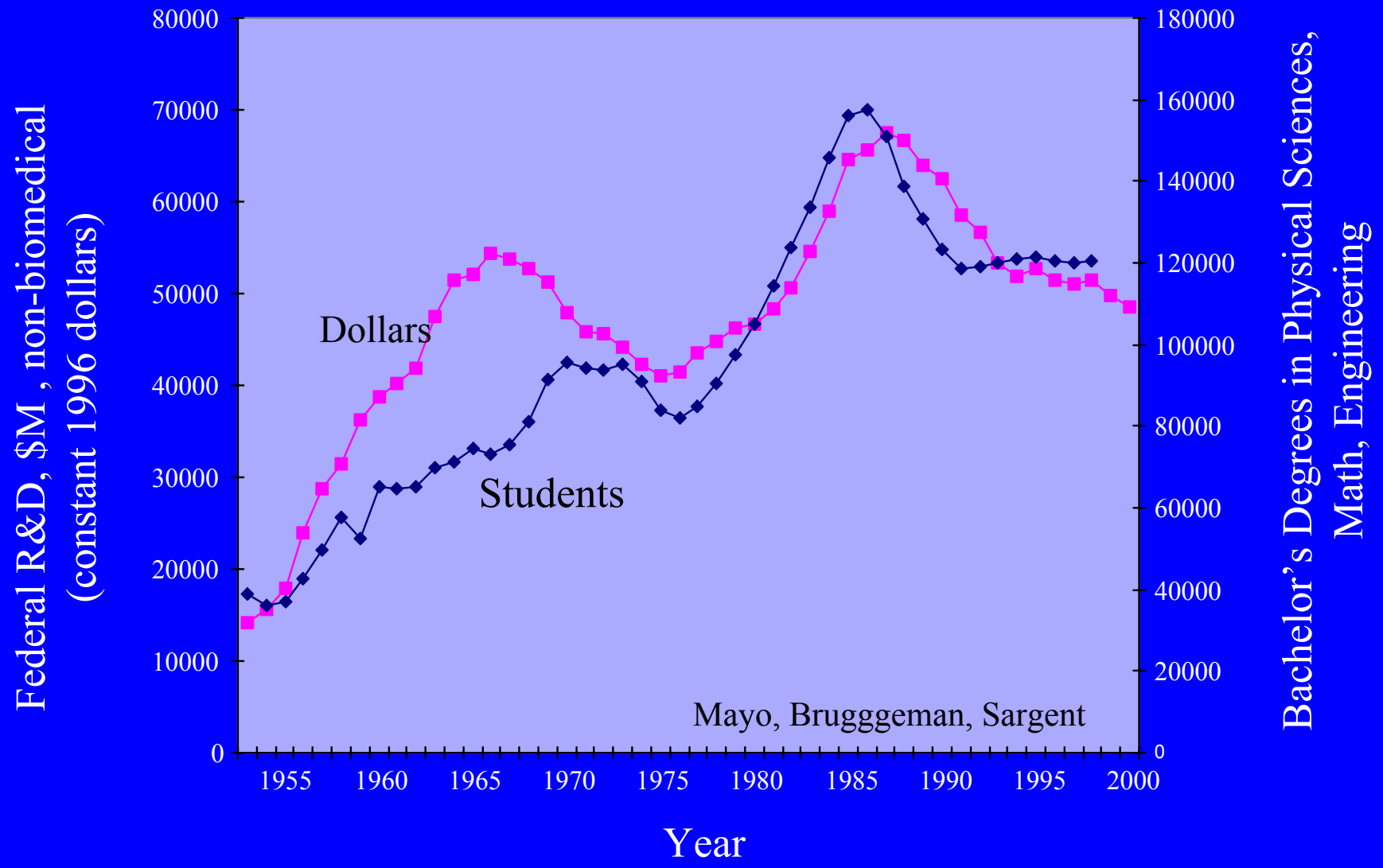
Why?

Technological Leadership: More Funding Will Bring Students into the Physical Sciences



Healthy S&E Talent Pool Necessary to Keep Tech Companies in the U.S.

"...If there are not enough trained people in the U.S., corporations will have to move R&D operations to where the trained people are. The pilot plant follows, because you need the R&D people nearby to help make it work. The manufacturing plant follows the pilot plant. Distribution, sales, and management follow the manufacturing. Once this process is started, it is not reversible. Corporations may not like it but they will survive if there is no R&D in the U.S. They will just go overseas. The U.S. economy, however,will not recover from the loss of this business."

--Bill Joyce, CEO of Hercules

Economic Growth: 50% of all Economic Growth Can Be Attributed to "Technological Progress"

Author (Year)	Time Period	% of Economic Growth Due to		
		Capital	Labor	Tech. Progress
Abramovitz (1956)	1869-1953	22	33	48
Solow (1957)	1909-1949	21	24	51
Kendrick (1961)	1889-1953	21	34	44
Denison (1962)	1909-1929	26	32	33
	1929-1957	15	16	58
Denison (1967)	1950-1962	25	19	47
Kuznets (1971)	1950-1962	25	19	56
	1929-1957	8	14	78
	1889-1929	34	32	34
Jorgenson (1972)	1950-1962	40	8	51
Kendrick (1973)	1948-1966	21	24	56
Denison (1979)	1929-1976	15	26	50
Denison (1985)	1929-1982	19	26	46
Jorgenson (1987)	1948-1979	12	20	69

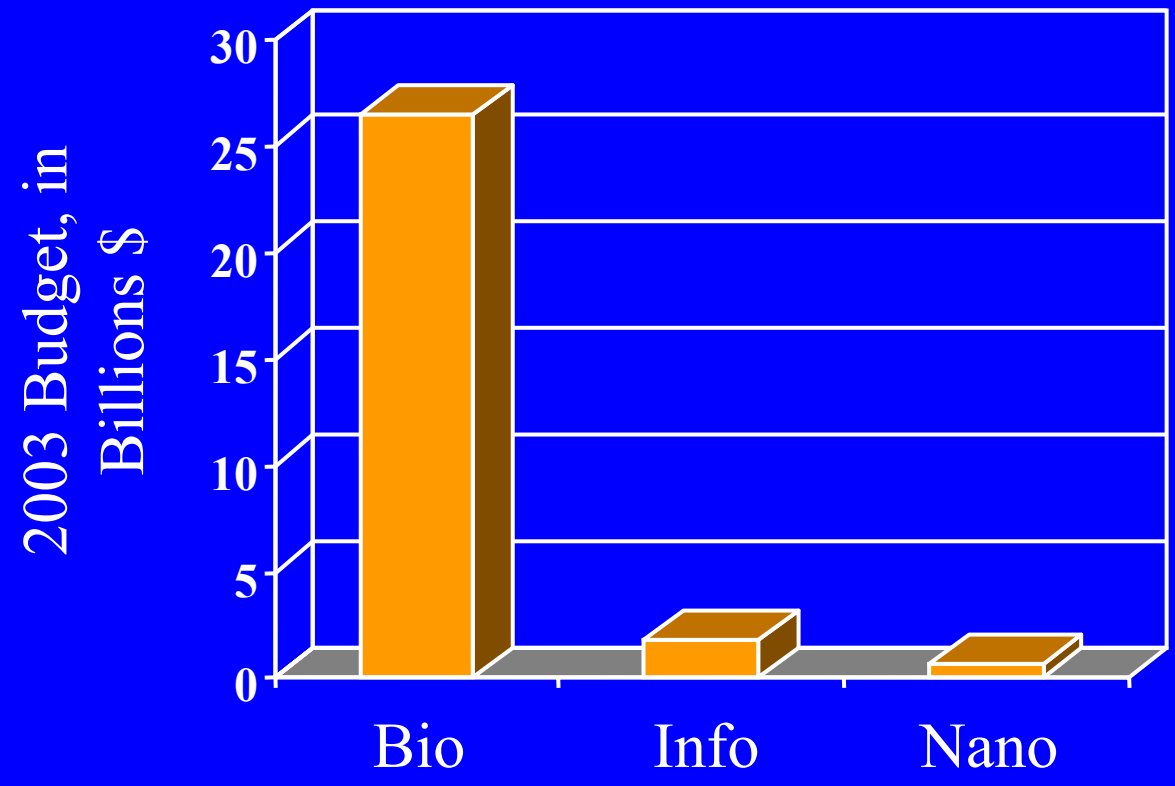
National Security: Hart-Rudman Report (Feb. 2001)

- First recommendation: Predicts imminent terrorist attacks on the U.S. homeland. Urges, as its highest priority, the pre-emptive formation of an Office of Homeland Security.

- Second recommendation: Doubling federal spending on R&D by 2010. Recommendation is prefaced by this ominous quotation:
  - "Second only to a weapon of mass destruction detonating in an American city, we can think of nothing more dangerous than a failure to manage properly science, technology, and education for the common good over the next quarter century."

Self-Interest:

In the Big Picture, Nanotechnology is still a Nanophenomenon. Lobbying can Change That.



What a Difference a Constituency Makes

- Post- 9/11: NIH's Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases receives $1,547M additional to develop cures for biological attacks.

- Post-9/11: NSF, DOE, DOD, and other physical sciences agencies receive $0 additional to develop sensors that would prevent biological (and chemical and nuclear) attacks from happening in the first place

Most legislators can't understand why physical scientists have no interest in more money

- "For these bills to have a positive impact on funding decisions in the Congressional appropriations process, it is not enough for proponents to introduce them. We need active help and support from the larger scientific community . . . to help us to reach out to other Members of Congress . . . ." - Senator Jeff Bingaman (D, NM)

- "The scientific community must not be complacent, and it cannot assume that it inherently has the greatest claim to, or most self-evident argument for federal largess. That's a recipe for failure." - Rep. Boehlert (R. NY)

- "I have found scientists . . . to be among the least effective lobbyists and have watched more focused special interests receive more money than they deserve while the future was starved of resources." - Newt Gingrich, Former Speaker, U.S. House of Representative

- Physical science is going to have to make its own case, just as life science is now effectively making its case to the public and Congress." - Bill Bonvillian, Legislative Director for Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D, CT)

Why Bother?

Why? No One Else Will Do It

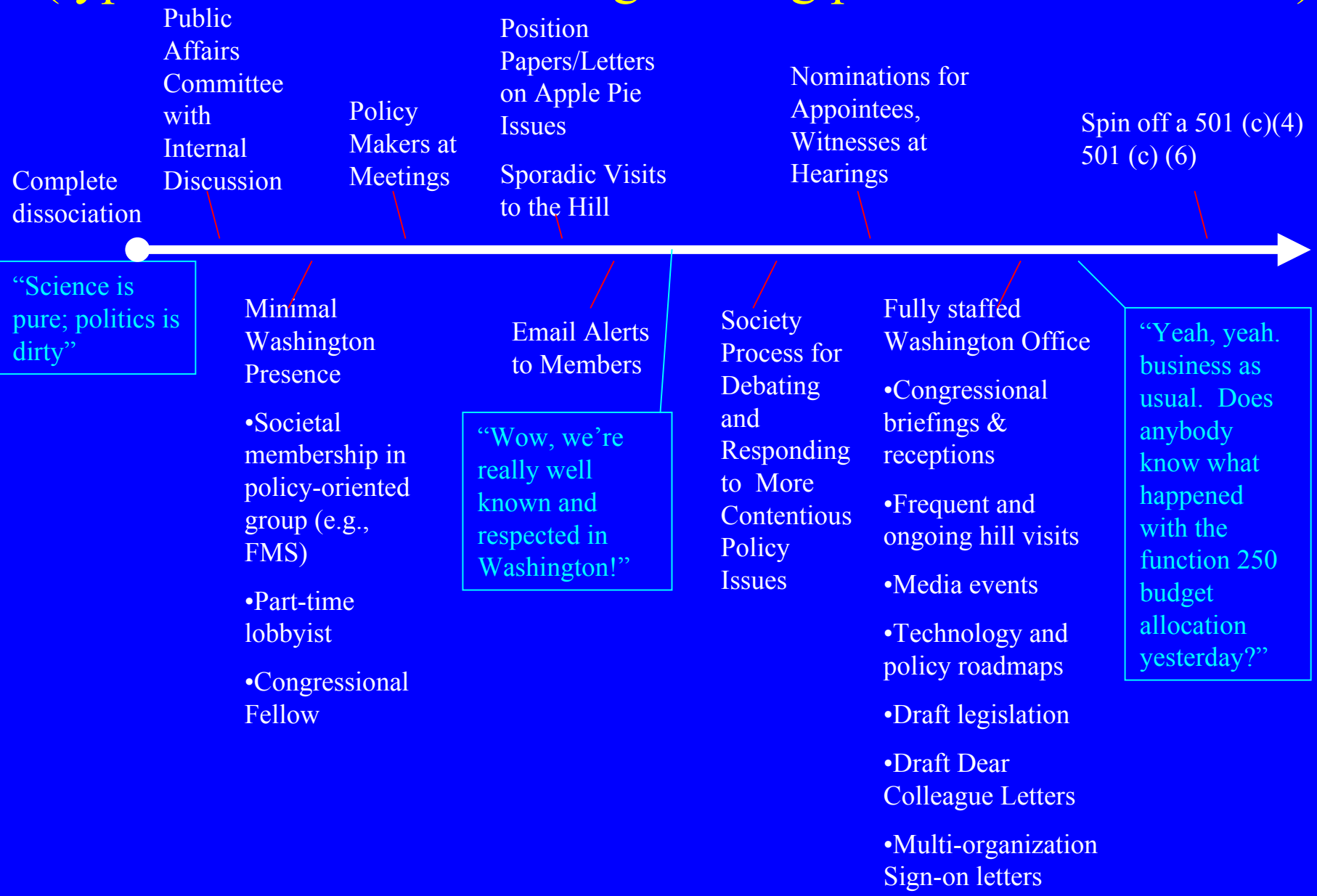
Most researchers in the physical sciences think someone else is lobbying on behalf of physical sciences research, but no one is.

- Not the National Academies - not their job
- Not the national/federal laboratories - illegal
- Not the federal agencies - illegal
- Not the major industries - by and large uninterested; see no connection to their needs
- Not the universities (until the past few years) - historically parochial and pork-centered

Physical Science & Engineering Community Suffers from "Fear Of Lobbying"

- Politics is still "dirty" to many professional societies representing the physical sciences. Culturally, we aren't fond of lobbying.
  - "We're scientists, not politicians"
    - » Leery of spending money on lobbyist, orchestrating trips to the Hill
    - » Individuals visiting Washington on other business rarely bother to see their Congressmen on the same trip.
  - No multimillion dollar, 400+ member organization umbrella advocacy group, like those representing the life sciences
  - No cultivation of the general public to lobby on science issues (unlike environmental movement)
- Rough ratio of letters to Congress in support of physical sciences vs. life sciences is 1 or 2 to 250
- Many appropriators have never been approached at all with regard to the "imbalance" issue.

Spectrum of Public Policy Engagement (typical for science and engineering professional societies)

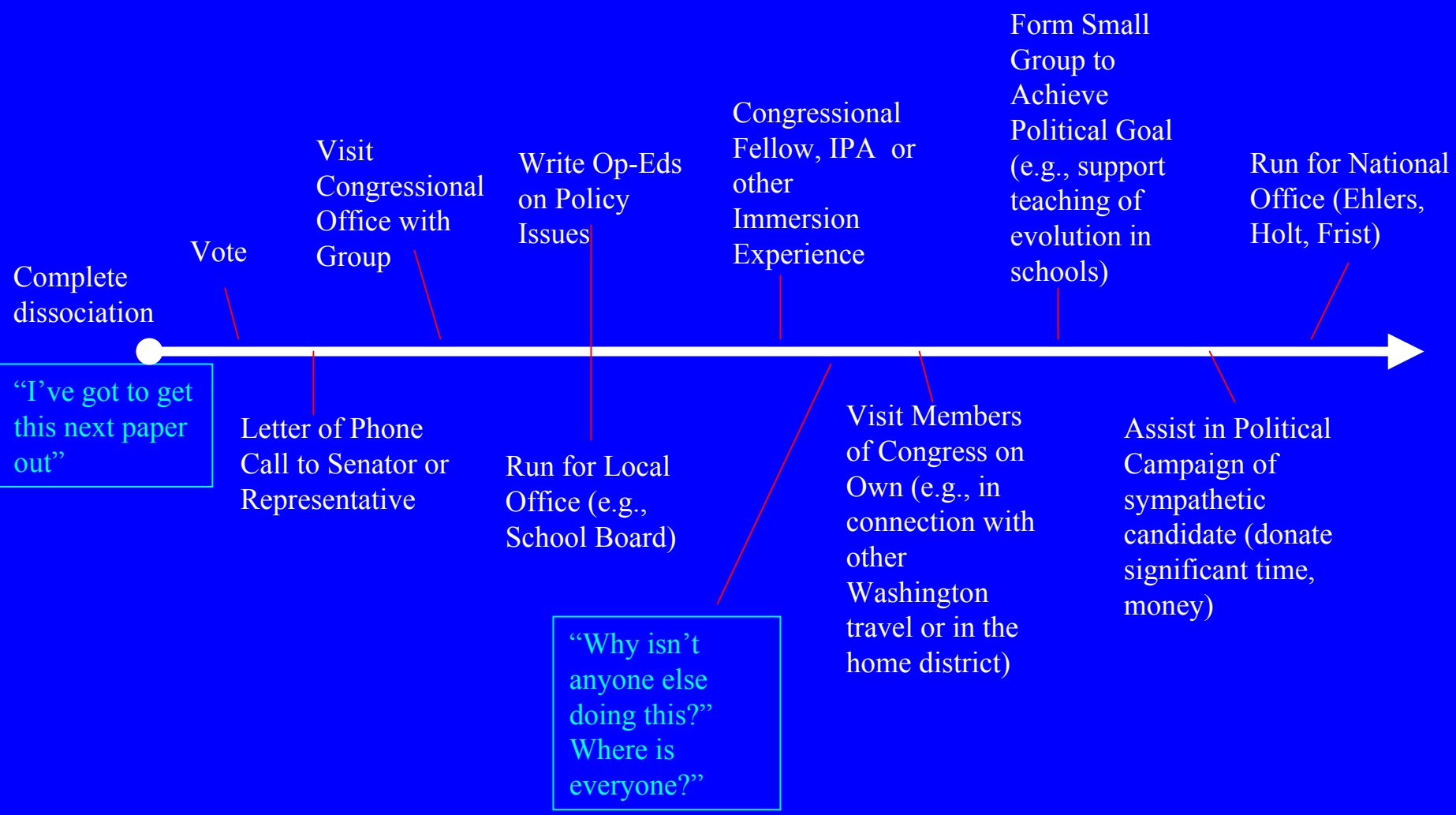


If we lobby, we'll lose our 501 (c) (3) status!

Lobbying Expenditure Ceilings as Defined by 501 (h)

Exempt Purpose Expenditures	Total Lobbying Ceiling	Grassroots Lobbying Ceiling
Up to $500,000	20%	5%
$500,000-$1,000,000	$100,0000 + 15% of excess over $500,000	$25,0000 + 3.75% of excess over $500,000
$1,000,000-$1,500,000	$175,000 + 10% of excess over $1,000,000	$43,750 + 2.5% of excess over $1,000,000
$1,500,000 - $17,000,000	$225,000 + 5% of excess over $1,500,000	$56,250 + 1.25% of excess over $1,500,000
$17,000,000	$1,000,000	$250,000

Spectrum of Public Policy Engagement (typical for individuals)



I'd be embarrassed to write/contact my legislator and not get all the facts right!

- This is not a research paper or an oral exam! No one is grading you.
- All constituent mail is read and tallied, regardless
  - Postcard with only "Dump Bubba" = 1 vote for impeach Clinton
- Mail on non-standard issues for which there is no prewritten form letter response (=science) usually is handled with a personal response from staff

I don't want to exert "undue influence" on legislators and disrupt the legislative process!

- Making the case for what you want directly to the legislature *is* the legislative process
  - It is the expected first step
  - Your request is weighed with all others - and there are many
  - Conveying your needs and situation by ESP does not result in money arriving by astral projection.
  - Griping about politics with your colleagues is also not an effective transmittal mechanism.
  - Groups that do not participate in the "process" and then expect results are considered naïve.
- Fat chance! Scientists and engineers are about the least powerful lobby out there.
  - Lower ammunition: e.g., veterans vs. NSF in VA-HUD appropriations
  - More difficult target than most: (approx.) 7x2x2= (approx) 28 committees involved in science
  - We're getting better. Now, "about as effective as the beer distributor lobby."

How?

Letter Writing Pointers

- Keep your message short: < 2 pages
- Express a solid position
- Make a specific request
  - cosponsor existing bill
  - introduce new bill
  - change bill [increase funding allocation in appropriations bill]
  - Support/do not support (vote for/against) bill
- Mention a specific piece of legislation if at all possible (H.R. xxx, S xx)

Letter Writing Pointers, continued

- Email preferred over snail mail ever since anthrax incident
- Name and email address of your representative can be found at www.senate.gov, www.house.gov.
- On envelope or beginning of email, put your name and address and also: "Attention: Science and Technology L.A." (L.A.=legislative assistant)
  - Your address is very important - it keeps the mail room from throwing out your mail/email. Offices do not respond to email from individuals who are not constituents.
  - The LA identification ensures a knowledgeable staffer will your letter, and that you will not just get a mail-room generated form letter in response.

Phone Call Pointers

- Washington office phone numbers are listed at www.house.gov and www.senate.gov
- You need to get past the receptionist!
- Ask the receptionist who the name of their current science and technology LA is, and whether you could speak to him/her.
- You may get a person or a voice mail. Identify yourself, your issue, and give your request (e.g., draft, cosponsor, modify legislation).
- You can send follow-up letter to the call, or use call as a follow-up to a letter already sent. Ditto for visit/call combinations.

Visit Pointers

- Call ahead to get an appointment with the legislative assistant, or better yet, the Member.
- Remember, you are their constituent. They *have* to see you. This is their job.
- Come prepared with a solid position and a specific request.
- In conversation, link your request to the well-being of the district ("all politics is local"), or specific interest areas of the Member (check biographies).
  - If the request is more money for DOE's Office of Science, what has DOE funding done for the region? For Member interests like minority involvement or stamp collecting?

Visit Pointers, continued

- Do not dwell on the science itself. Dwell on the impact of the science for humanity. Especially humanity in the Member's district!
- Don't forget your business cards.
- Do not denigrate or disparage other disciplines, causes. Instead, fashion your request so it bolsters theirs.
- A one page or two page handout is useful as a leave-behind.
- Small touchy-feelies can be wonderful leave-behinds, too.

President Clinton's Nanosaxophone

287,900

Made by Cornell Nanofabrication Facility

(smallest feature is 25 nm)

In Summary:

- No lobbying, no R&D funding from the government.
- No R&D funding from the government,
  - No scientists and engineers from the universities
  - No tech companies in the U.S.
  - No economic growth
  - No national security

We can fix this, but we are the *only* ones who can fix this.

I'm a government employee and I'll get put in jail if I lobby!

Federal Employees (Federal Agencies; Congress; White House)

- Cannot lobby.
- Needs to consult employer's rules before taking an elected officer position within a society that does lobby. Can serve, but with restrictions.
- Can contact their own legislator as an individual on issues not related to their work institution.

Non-Federal Employees (National Labs; Contractors; National Academies)

- Cannot lobby wearing their government "hat."
- Can often lobby wearing their society "hat." Need to consult employer for exact rules, esp. regarding expense reimbursement.
- Can participate in government affairs discussions and take elected officer positions within a society that does lobby.

If we lobby, we'll lose our 501 (c) (3) status!

501 (c) (3)

- Cannot do "substantial lobbying"
- What is "substantial?"
- What is "lobbying?"
- Neither is defined. Many organizations nervous.
- In practice, both are more generous than you might think
- Must keep track of activities and expenses involved in lobbying.
- Punishment for exceeding the lobbying limit is permanent loss of 501 (c) (3) status and personal liability for Executive Director.

501 (h) election

- A one page IRS form (#5768) that can be filled out by the (c) (3), and can be revoked at will.
- Binds the organization to a concrete definition of "substantial" and "lobbying"
- Otherwise has no effect on non-profit status of the organization.
- Must keep track of only expenses involved in lobbying.
- Punishment for exceeding the lobbying limit is a fine based on the exceeded dollar amount. (Loss of non-profit status occurs only after 4 years of 150% abuse)

Why? *Everything* Depends On It

- Technological leadership: depends on our ability to produce the next generation of scientists and engineers.
- Economic growth: "technological progress" is #1 ingredient for economic growth
- National Security: Bottom-line ingredient for military superiority
- (More money for your research.)

- “Support for science in Congress is broad, as I said, but it isn't always deep. While virtually no one opposes science spending in principle, it can get sacrificed to pay for other priorities . . . all of you need to do a better job of telling people in my position just how much is at stake in funding you. . . .And you have a great story to tell, especially about nanotechnology. A field like nanotechnology that is brimming with both intellectual excitement and practical, economic potential is exactly the kind of field that Congress likes to support.”

- “Few things could actually be bigger than nanotechnology - in terms of its potential to revolutionize scientific and engineering research, improve human health and bolster our economy.”

-Sherwood Boehlert, Chairman of the House Science Committee

501 (h) criteria

Substantial

- $100K for a $500K organization; $1M for a $17M organization. Sliding scale in between.
- 25% of permissible $ can be spent on "grassroots" lobbying
  - Grassroots = contacting non-members and asking them to contact their legislators on a specific bill
- Activity must actually cost money to count: blast emails, volunteer's self-paid travel and time do not count

Lobbying

- Three criteria must all be met
  - Must communicate directly with a legislator or encourage others to contact legislator
  - Must take a position on the issue
  - Must refer to a specific piece of legislation
- Things that do not count:
  - Conveying information to members for which there is no "call to action"
  - Non-partisan analysis
  - Conveying general information to the Hill for which there is no bill
  - Time/money spent on background research on an issue
  - Congressional Fellows
  - Materials originally created and disseminated widely for non-lobbying purposes that were subsequently (>6 months later) used for lobbying.