A

PUBLIC
POLICY
PRIMER

*How To Get
Off the Sidelines and
Into the Game*

DAVID C. HOLLISTER

People · Knowledge · Action · Networks

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IEL

Institute for Educational Leadership

About IEL

The Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) is at the heart of an impartial, dynamic, nationwide network of people and organizations from many walks of life who share a passionate conviction—excellent education is critical to nurturing healthy individuals, families, and communities.

IEL's mission is to increase the capacity of individuals and organizations to work together across boundaries, leading the way to improved results in the learning and development of *all* youth. IEL pursues its mission through inquiry and action in three areas:

- Developing and Supporting Leadership
- Connecting Schools, Families, and Communities
- Resolving Policy/Practice Barriers.

IEL believes that all children and youth have a birthright: the opportunity and the support to develop, learn, and become contributing members of our democratic society. Our work with diverse stakeholders enables them to learn from one another and collaborate closely—across boundaries of race and culture, discipline, economic interest, political stance, unit of government, or any other area of difference—to achieve better results for all children and youth, from pre-K through high school and on into postsecondary education.

IEL's role is to inspire, build, and nurture networks of leaders who pursue dialogue and take action on educational problems. IEL helps these individuals and organizations: build the capacity to lead; share promising practices; translate research into suggestions for improvement; and share results electronically, in print, and in person.

IEL is a nonprofit, non-partisan organization based in Washington, DC, with affiliated programs in 48 states and the District of Columbia. Please visit the Web site at *www.iel.org* to learn more about IEL and its current work.

About The Michigan Education Policy Fellowship Program (EPFP)

The Michigan EPFP Program was established in 1975 as one of the national program's initial state sites. Over the past three decades, the Michigan EPFP annually serves a diverse mix of individuals and organizations. The Fellows represent many different organizations, including school systems; government education and human service agencies; statewide associations; and private sector organizations.

The Fellows are geographically dispersed and meet monthly for seminars, presenta-tions, workshops, interactive learning, and leadership development activities. Seminar speakers include EPFP Alumni, elected officials, agency heads and staff, leaders from special interest and advocacy groups, academic experts, and other policy and corporate leaders.

Each year the program gives Fellows a forum for exploring a broad array of public policy issues, links to key figures who shape and influence the policy process, and access to new leadership skills. The Internet and the Web are used extensively to share ideas and information which support the Michigan EPFP learning community. An annual Alumni Seminar is held to encourage networking among the 750 graduates of the program to date.

The Michigan site is affiliated with The Education Policy Center at Michigan State University. Additional information can be obtained at: *http://www.educ.msu.edu/epfp/*.

FOREWORD

This Primer is intended to help individual citizens and community leaders and organizers (1) better understand the complex nature of decision making in our democracy and (2) identify strategies for having a larger voice and impact. Written by David Hollister, the publication is predicated and draws upon Hollister's 40 years of extensive and hands-on experiences in varied leadership roles—elected as well as appointed—at the local, state, and national levels. Prior to his appointment as President and CEO of the recently established Prima Civitas Foundation, Hollister served as the Director of the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth. He has also been a classroom teacher and an elected county commissioner, state legislator, and the mayor of Lansing, Michigan.

A joint effort of the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) and the Michigan site of IEL's Education Policy Fellowship Program (EPFP), the Primer is structured around three kinds of policy. The first focuses on the gold standard of public policy: Good Policy/Good Politics. The second describes Good Policy/Bad Politics; and the third type is Bad Policy/Good Politics.

This Primer presents—in a practical, readable manner—the policy framework within which our political system operates and describes the people and the organizations that drive our multi-faceted democratic system. It elaborates on different kinds of policy and the diverse styles of elected officials and on how politics intersects with these factors. The three arenas in which policy is made—elected bodies, courts, and the "streets"—are discussed as are the varied ways elected bodies make policies as diverse sets of actors interact with the political system.

The final section of the Primer discusses how communities and individual citizens can most effectively organize to influence and have an impact on the policy and political system. Factors such as the importance of numbers, legitimacy, and diverse forms of power are discussed. The Primer concludes with the key ingredients and rules of successful group action, including the twenty-first century phenomenon—the Internet.

The Michigan EPFP and its senior coordinator, Dan Schultz, played a central role in the development of this publication. The "Hollister Model" of policy and politics, as it has become known throughout the Michigan EPFP network of current and former Fellows, describes the complex forces that have an impact on the policy and the policy-making process at all governance levels. For more than 25 years, David Hollister served as an expert policy resource and annual seminar speaker for the Michigan EPFP, enabling more than 750 Michigan EPFP participants to benefit from his experiences as an elected or appointed city, county, and state policymaker. On two occasions, Hollister served as keynote speaker at national EPFP Leadership Forums, taking his message nationwide to IEL's Education Policy Fellows (Irvine, California in 2000 and Miami Beach, Florida in 2004).

In 2000, David Hollister was awarded IEL's prestigious National Leadership Award, recognizing his outstanding policy leadership as well as his contributions to and support of the EPFP.

I was privileged to review early drafts of this important primer on good policy and good politics. I am certain that David Hollister's practical wisdom, as encapsulated in this document, will be of tremendous value to policymakers in education and other fields and, equally important, to *all* citizens interested in the workings of our nation's political system—*any and all* who want to make sure their voices are heard and heeded.

Michael D. Usdan
Senior Fellow
The Institute for Educational Leadership
May 2007

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A PUBLIC POLICY PRIMER

U nderstanding public policy is not all that difficult once one understands the fundamentals.

THREE KINDS OF POLICY

Basically, there are three kinds of public policy:

- Good Policy/Good Politics
- Good Policy/Bad Politics
- Bad Policy/Good Politics.

Good Policy/Good Politics

Assume that you, the policymaker, have a group of ten experts evaluate a proposed intervention to resolve a problem. **Good Policy/Good Politics** occurs when they conclude that it will produce a measurable and positive outcome (good policy)—and no one is expected to criticize you, write negative letters to the editor, send negative e-mails, or flog you on a blog (good politics).

> *Case-in-Point:* One example of good policy/good politics is the right-turn-on-red bill that was enacted by many state legislatures during the energy crisis of the late 1970s. Policymakers wanted to promote oil conservation and also deal with people's natural impatience. So, laws were enacted that allowed one to pull up to a stop light, look both ways, and proceed to turn right if there was no traffic, thereby saving energy (good policy) and addressing people's level of impatience (good politics). Legislators were never criticized for enacting this policy even though some deaths and injuries might have resulted from it. This was good policy and good politics.

Good Policy/Bad Politics

The second kind of policy is **Good Policy/Bad Politics.** In this case, nine of the ten experts agree that, if adopted, the proposed intervention will lead to a measurable and positive outcome (good policy). You *will* be criticized, however; negative letters to the editor will appear; and you will pay some kind of political price for advocating or supporting the proposal (bad politics).

Case-in-Point: An example of good policy/bad politics is the mandatory seatbelt law. As a young legislator, I was approached by the Secretary of State and asked to read a study by the University of Michigan indicating how many lives would be saved, how many injuries reduced, and how much money saved by enacting mandatory seatbelt legislation. I was also given a copy of a University of South Carolina survey indicating very little public support for this policy. At that time, about 60 percent of the people interviewed in a national survey were somewhat or strongly opposed to mandatory seatbelt legislation. While it was good public health policy, it was also clear that it was bad politics.

Because the evidence was overwhelming that mandatory seatbelts would indeed save lives, reduce injuries, and save Medicaid dollars, I introduced the first mandatory seatbelt legislation in America. The response was immediate and overwhelmingly negative. At first blush, the issue was interpreted as a civil liberties issue—governmental coercion versus a public health issue. It took four years of advocacy and education to persuade the public and the legislature that seat belts save lives and, more importantly, that it is the proper role of government to regulate public health and safety issues. As people came to understand the public health nature of the policy, attitudes changed and seat belts became not only good policy but also good politics.

Case-in-Point: Another important public policy issue that falls in good policy/bad politics category is the durable power of attorney legislation that deals with people's right to die. I introduced the first bill of this kind in America after watching my grandfather be put on life support against his expressed but unwritten will. I learned how inadequate the laws were when dealing with incapacitated and unconscious people. I tried to intervene on behalf of my family to stop unwanted and unnecessary treatment for my unconscious and incompetent grandfather who had suffered a series of strokes. While he had made his wishes known and did not want to be hooked up to life support equipment, the circumstances of his last stroke initiated a full range of life-support equipment. Unfortunately, the laws did not allow family members to stop treatment. After watching my grandfather suffer for weeks, with his hands and feet tied to the hospital bed, I decided that I would tackle this public policy issue.

I created a statewide task force to look at this complex issue and introduced the first durable power of attorney legislation in the country. The initial response was overwhelmingly negative. While it was good policy, and most public health experts agreed that clarification was needed in this area, the politics were terrible. (I was accused of wanting to kill people.) It

subsequently took 16 years of public education and continuous lobbying to get the bill passed. Basically, our task was to make it both good policy and good politics, which eventually happened through a concentrated, disciplined, strategic effort involving broad public health and senior citizen constituencies and their advocacy.

Bad Policy/Good Politics

The third type of public policy is **Bad Policy/Good Politics.** In this situation, the group of ten experts will tell you that the proposed intervention will not get the outcome you want, but it is still good politics.

Case-in-Point: The HIV crisis of the early 1980s is an example of bad policy/good politics. HIV had become a national and international health crisis, and legislatures were being urged to do something. Politics required some kind of action. Eventually, several legislatures passed legislation that would require couples getting married to undergo HIV counseling. Public health experts agreed that this intervention would not be effective policy— couples getting married were not the at-risk group. The most at-risk groups were intravenous (IV) drug users and people with multiple sex partners. Several states considered legislation that would have given free needles to IV drug users. While this might have been good public health policy, it was extremely bad politics and no state adopted the free needle policy. The same was true of a proposal to provide free, unlimited access to condoms.

I have found over the years that legislative bodies spend a disproportionate amount of their time on bad policy and good politics. That is why it is so important for people to understand and to participate in the policy process. Most policymakers want to do what's right and productive, but they also have to get reelected. Therefore the policy suffers and politics all too often prevail.

THREE POLICY ARENAS

Once one understands the three kinds of policy, one needs to understand the three different arenas in which public policy is made in a democratic society.

Elected Bodies

The first arena is public **Elected Bodies.** On the national level, there is Congress; the state legislature on the state level; and, on the local level, the county commission, city council, township trustees, and school boards. In each instance we elect someone from our neighborhood to represent us in the elected body. The idea of representing a specific

geographic area is key, as policymakers are expected to be accessible to and reflective of this constituency. The elected body comes together for a specific period of time, usually called a *session.* The first order of business is establishing a consensus agenda on the most urgent issues facing the community, whether on the national, state, or local level, and then developing a strategy for dealing with each specific agenda item.

Elective bodies are generally very open, participatory, and deliberative. The process is one of consensus building and compromise. Given the great complexity and diversity of our nation, our state, and our community, it is difficult and time consuming to agree on the agenda of priority, urgent issues, and, more specifically, on a strategy for solving the problems that are identified. If the elected body is not successful in resolving the problem, the problem doesn't go away.

The Courts

If unresolved, the problem moves to the second arena we have created to make policy— **the Courts.** The courts offer a completely different kind of arena for policymaking. It is not as open, as participatory, or as consensual. Courts are an adversarial arena. You must be or have an attorney to participate. The process is very structured and follows strict points of law. Opponents are offered the opportunity to reach a settlement outside of the courtroom, if the parties are willing and able to compromise. If the parties cannot reach agreement, however, the courts will oversee a legal process that creates a winner and a loser. Whatever the out- come, the court issues an opinion that prevails as "public policy" until changed by a higher court or an elected body. Sometimes the court is unsuccessful in reaching a solution—or it chooses not to act. The issue does not go away.

The Streets

Instead, the unresolved issue moves to the third arena that we have created to make policy— **the Streets.** The street strategy allows for a public debate in a less formal atmosphere. It can be as simple as writing a letter to the editor, circulating a petition, or protesting at City Hall or the state Capitol; more active involvement might include organizing or taking part in public marches, mass demonstrations, or even civil disobedience. The participants in the street strategy are trying to educate the public and policymakers about their particular issue. The posters, handbills, speeches, and actions are all designed to increase awareness of the problem and educate the public about the issue. If enough interest or tension is created, the various elected bodies will be forced to take action. The streets become the forum when the elected bodies and courts fail to adequately address an issue. This important safety valve is provided in a democratic society. It is no accident that when a totalitarian government takes over, its first action is to limit freedom of assembly and freedom of speech. Over the years the civil rights movement, women's movement, antiwar movement, environmental movement, and the debate over abortion policy have played out their dramas in the streets. When this avenue is not available, violence is generally the alternative. Therefore, it is important to understand the critical role the streets play in a democratic society and the formulation of public policy.

THREE KINDS OF POLICYMAKERS

In addition to the three kinds of public policy and the three arenas in which to make policy, there are three kinds of public officials, who see their role as policymakers quite differently.

Delegate

The first kind of policymaker is a **Delegate.** Delegates believe themselves to be representative of their neighborhood or district; they see their role as reflecting and representing the views and values of their constituencies. They are very sensitive to the polls and are always trying to understand the prevailing public opinion in their specific districts. These public officials take the concept of "representative" literally, working hard to reflect the interests and values of their neighbors. Delegates are acutely aware of public opinion and polls and, consequently, tend to be more followers than leaders. Delegates make up the majority of elected officials serving in most elected bodies.

Trustee

The second kind of policymaker is a **Trustee.** The trustee is someone who advocates a specific ideology, principle, or value that they believe best serves the public and is less interested in the prevailing public opinion. Trustees place a high value on principle and their particular world view and are often seen as uncompromising and rigid. A liberal Democrat and a conservative Republican would view themselves as trustees, as would pro-choice or right-to-life advocates, even environmental advocates. The key idea here is that trustees are concerned about public opinion and may be persuaded by information or research that reflects their particular world views. Trustees see themselves as leaders and enjoy policy as it relates to their world views. Trustees generally make up 10 to 15 percent of public bodies, clearly a minority but an important factor in policymaking.

Politico

The third kind of policymaker is the **Politico.** This person is more interested in the campaign, trappings, and benefits of office than the particulars of public policy. Politicos are always looking for the next office, always campaigning, and focus little time on public policy, except as it impacts their ability to seek and achieve another office.

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As one considers impacting public policy and approaching public officials, it is important to know how they each view themselves. One approaches a delegate differently than one approaches a trustee. With a delegate, one would want to demonstrate broad public support for the issue they are advocating. One would want to approach the delegate with petitions, polls, and letters of support from important individuals. When one approaches a trustee, however, it is more important to have data that support that individual's philosophical orientation and enhance the public good as they see it. One approaches the politico with an eye on the next campaign and how the issue you advocate will be impacted by the next election. The politico will also be very sensitive to current polls.

One easy way to remember these introductory comments is to think of three Ps—**policy, politics,** and **personality**—as all three interact in this dynamic process.

FIVE WAYS ELECTED BODIES MAKE POLICY

Public policy is traditionally made in elected bodies. Most people believe that the lawmaking process is the beginning and end of policymaking, but it is important to understand that there are five separate and distinct ways that public bodies make policy.

Lawmaking

The first and most obvious is **Lawmaking** itself. On the national level, Congress enacts laws. On the state level, the legislature enacts laws. On the local level, elected bodies pass resolutions and ordinances that have the force of law but are secondary to the state and federal laws.

The lawmaking process itself is one of compromise and consensus building. Any lawmaker can introduce any bill at any time in the legislative session. These sessions are two-year cycles in which proposals are considered and either become law or not. Most state legislatures consider about 4,000 bills in a two-year legislative cycle. On average, 90 percent of the bills introduced will fail and only 10 percent will become law. This is true on the national, state, and local level. What distinguishes those ideas and bills that become law from those that fail is twofold—aligning good policy with good politics and the effective participation of multiple constituencies, which creates power. (Later, I will discuss the multiple forms of power and how to effectively use power to impact public policy.)

The average time it takes an idea to become a law, if it's not too controversial, is three to five years. It takes time to convince the leadership that your ideas have broad enough support to make it to the agenda. The proposal is then sent to committee to be studied and refined. Input is received from every sector, and the bills are examined and approved a line and a page at a time. In Congress and State Legislatures (with the exception of Nebraska which has a one-house legislature), the same versions of a bill must pass both the House and Senate.

> *Case-in-Point:* Lawmaking is a deliberative, participatory, consensus-building process that can take years. If the issue is controversial, it can take 10 to 20 years. As I indicated earlier, the Michigan durable power of attorney (right to die) bill took 16 years to become law. Sixteen years of public education, advocacy, and lobbying to convince skeptical legislators that this idea was both good policy and good politics. Critical to that process was the uniform, broad, consistent, and strong advocacy by the senior citizen network in Michigan.

As difficult and time consuming as it is to have an idea become a law and get the bill signed by the governor, it is important to understand that you've actually just begun the policymaking process.

Budget Process

A law without a **Budget** is simply rhetoric. The budget-making process is as critical as the lawmaking process. The budget process generally is an annual process that runs independently of the lawmaking process. Each year the president, governor, mayor, school superintendent, or township supervisor presents their annual proposed budget to their respective elected bodies. The entire body does not consider the budget; it is referred to an appropriations (or budget) committee. These budget committees are generally not as representative demographically as the entire elective body, but tend to be made up of the more senior members of the legislature. These senior members have more experience, seniority, and power.

The appropriations committees themselves are broken into subcommittees, which parallel the Cabinet departments on the national, state, and even local levels. So, you'll have a House subcommittee on education and a Senate subcommittee on education. You'll have a House subcommittee on state police, a Senate subcommittee on state police, and on it goes until the entire cabinet is covered. The subcommittees are organized along partisan lines with the majority party controlling the subcommittee in the same ratio that it controls the particular chamber. The subcommittees and the subcommittee chairs are extraordinarily powerful because the members are usually experts on the particular department and have considerable influence on the policies and budget of that particular department. It is absolutely critical to know who those subcommittee members are and to follow their actions as the budget moves through the process.

Most subcommittees hold hearings, seek public input, and operate transparently in the initial phases of the budget process, which generally occurs early in the year. The budget bills get full consideration by both chambers and eventually end up in a joint House Senate Conference subcommittee to resolve all policy differences. Those final decisions are made in the middle of the night on the last night before the Legislature adjourns for its summer recess, generally the night before the Fourth of July holiday. These complex multimillion-dollar budgets are generally negotiated between the chairperson of the House subcommittee and the chairperson of the Senate subcommittee in the middle of the night, without anyone else knowing the details and actual line items in each bill. The chair of the subcommittee briefs the leadership, and then the modified bill is considered by the full Legislature and, again, enacted late in the night without the non-appropriations members understanding the detail or the complexity of the budget they are voting on. This is why it's important to be informed and engaged in the hearings, so that you understand your relative position going into this initial period. It is also imperative to meet with and understand the policymakers themselves, whether they see themselves as trustees or delegates, and to get your idea or program understood by these influential policymakers as they consider the budget options late into the night before the summer recess. While you will not be there in person, you can still have an impact if you have met with, informed, and persuaded the key leaders of the merits of your program or policy.

Generally speaking, governors will not support funding a new program at 100 percent in the first year. More than likely, the governor will recommend a modest beginning and incrementally increase the program over a period of years. It is important to follow the budget process over time as well.

Case-in-Point: I personally was involved in enacting a law requiring bilingual education in Michigan. The law said that any school district that had more than 50 students with limited English speaking ability must provide a full-time bilingual education to those students. Unfortunately, the law did not define what "full-time program" meant nor did it appropriate the funds necessary to get it started. So while we celebrated the law (policy), we were frustrated by the lack of implementation (budget). It wasn't until the activists focused on the budget that the program got implemented. *Persistence and follow-through are critical in this process.*

While it has taken three years to get the law enacted and initially funded at only a 25 percent level, we are only part way through the legislative policy-making process.

Rule Making

As elected bodies consider legislation, they have the option of writing a complex, comprehensive, and detailed bill that tackles all of the issues and offers specific answers to the multiple policies involved. This strategy has the advantage of offering clarity, but the disadvantage is that the bill is considered a page and a line at a time and must pass both chambers exactly the same. The longer and more complex the bill, the higher the likelihood of adding years to the process.

An alternative legislative strategy is to pass a simple, two- or three-page bill that creates a policy framework, but leaves the detail to be worked out later. More and more legislatures are choosing the second option because it is simpler and faster and leaves some of the tougher decisions to the state bureaucracy. The process of formulating the specific policy growing out of this generalized brief legislation is called the **Administrative Procedures Process** or promulgating **Rules and Regulations.** Most states have enacted an elongated, transparent, and painfully precise process of formulating rules and regulations that clarify the policy.

These processes require public hearings, extended public comment, and a guarantee of a written response to every individual who testifies over the period of review. Unfortunately, consumers and advocates, who are traditionally active and engaged in the lawmaking process and somewhat in the budget-making process, generally stay away from the rules and regulation process because it is so intimidating and precise. Special interest groups have lobbyists, research resources, and budgets to fully engage in the complex and precise rule-making process. While citizen advocates feel comfortable dealing with broad policy issues and are willing to talk to their elected officials, they generally are less comfortable with the nitty-gritty detail. Special interest groups often succeed in reversing or significantly modifying the intent of original legislation because they have the time and resources to shape the details. (It is not uncommon for the rule-making process to go on for five to seven years.)

Oversight

Another policy-making arena in elected bodies is the **Oversight Committee.** These time-limited committees are created to look at a specific problem or issue and make recommendations to the full body. Oversight committees have the advantage of cross-fertilization with members from multiple standing committees and the appropriations committees of the legislative body. The process of creating an oversight committee involves simply finding enough interested legislators to commit the time and effort involved in the process—and convincing the leadership of either the House and Senate, or both, to create, staff, and provide resources so that oversight can be effective. Once created, their task is to define a problem, look at alternative solutions, hold public hearings, create public awareness, and make recommendations to the full body; then to advocate and follow through, getting those recommendations adopted as policy. (Examples of policy issues that have been effectively addressed by oversight committees include the medical malpractice insurance crisis, homelessness, environmental contamination, and lead paint extraction.)

Sunset Option

The final way that elected bodies make policy is through **Sunset,** referring to the concept that some kind of automatic review or termination is built into a policy. For example, the first mandatory seatbelt legislation had a provision that the bill would terminate after five years, giving the legislature the option to reenact it only if it were proven to be successful. (The final version excluded that provision but it was an important part of the early discussion of the policy.) Legislatures often enact laws that expire after a given number of years. The idea is to give the policy a chance, then re-enact it only if proven successful.

Another sunset strategy is to create a new program and an automatic review, but not termination, after five years. The idea behind the review is to create some kind of evaluation and accountability within the policy-making process. While accountability is important, it should be noted that many constitutional offices and their departments are exempt from sunset (e.g., secretary of state, attorney general); the politics are that you're not going to sunset the state police or the prison system or popular established programs. The tendency is to focus the sunset process on more vulnerable, less popular human service programs. Nevertheless, sunset is an important policy tool.

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To recap, then, we have a **Lawmaking** process that is open, participatory, and consensual, taking three to five years; a less participatory, annual **Budget** process; a five- to seven-year **Rule-Making** process; an **Oversight** process that allows for an evaluation and judgment on the effectiveness of the law, budget, and rules; and the potential to **Sunset** a program or policy. Conceptually, these legislative processes fit together. Ideally, a lawmaker helps formulate the law, participates in the budget, helps provide oversight, and is engaged in any serious sunset review of the policy or program. This happens when you have an extraordinarily talented and fully engaged policymaker who is committed to follow through during this extensive process. (Term limits, enacted in many states, severely hamper the ability of elected officials in playing this role. So, more than likely, a special interest group ends up providing continuity and advocacy over time. Power clearly has shifted to the special interests and the bureaucracy.)

KEY TRENDS TODAY

Now that we understand the three different kinds of policy, the three arenas around which policy is made, the three different ways that policymakers view themselves, and the five different ways that elected bodies make policy, let's look at some key trends that are impacting policymakers on the national, state, and local level.

The Futurists

Let's begin with the observations of many futurists.

Adapting To Change

Basically, futurists are saying that everything is changing and that change is accelerating. All institutions (i.e., business, social, political, educational, and even the family) are being challenged and must change, innovate, and adapt. The institutions that survive and thrive will have several things in common: they will be organized around the autonomy of the individual; provide customized, flexible programs and services; and be committed to self actualization, eliminating barriers and enabling people to participate at the level that facilitates their potential. (You see this phenomenon particularly in the disability community whose members insist that barriers preventing their full participation be corrected, or that devices be created, to allow maximum contribution.) Workers engaged and empowered to undertake bottom-up decision making will fully embrace adaptability and innovation. This is the essence of Deming's[1] work and the continuous, quality improvement process.

New Definitions of "Community"

The futurists are also saying that the nexus of power, the center of decision making, has shifted or devolved from the federal government, where it was pervasive in the 1940s through the 1960s; it then shifted to the states in the 1970s, 1980s, and even 1990s. Today, new regions are evolving that are defined by labor markets, not political boundaries, and led by the business community, not the political leadership. These new regional configurations are engaged with universities and are arranged through non-governmental organizations (both for-profit and nonprofit). This is a significant change and a common element of those communities that are thriving in America today.

Aging Population and Legacy Costs

One of the overriding trends is the aging of America's population.

The Aging and "Baby-Boom Generation" Factors

The economic and political implications of the aging of America are best understood when one focuses on how dramatically this has developed in the last few decades. In the middle of the last century, you were considered old if you were 50 or older. Today, those 65 to 75 are called the "young old"; those 75 to 85 are the "middle old"; and those 85 and older are the

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1 Author is referring to William Edwards Deming (October 14, 1900 to December 20, 1993), an American statistician, college professor, author, lecturer, and consultant, who was widely credited with improving production in the United States during World War II. Perhaps best known for his work in Japan, he is considered to have made a significant contribution to Japan's eventual renown for producing innovative, high-quality products.

"old old." The fastest growing portion of our population today is the "old old" category, increasing at a rate of four times the national average. To see how graphically this has changed in the last several years, let's look at 1950.

> **Case-in-Point:** In 1950, if you were 65, your chance of living to age 90 was 7 percent. In 2000, if you were 65, your chance of living to 90 increased to 33 percent. Because people are living longer, it should be no surprise that currently one million Americans are 100 years old or older. While this fact is interesting, it becomes troubling when one looks at the labor market supporting this aging cohort.
>
> In 1950, 17 people worked to support each retiree—by paying social security and taxes, producing goods and services, and providing a social safety net. By 2000, the number of people working to support each retiree dropped to 3. By 2020, projections show only 2 workers per retiree because of the pending retirement of 77 million Baby Boomers (those born between 1945 and 1960.) As people age, more is spent on health care; consequently, issues of how to pay for health care will become a much bigger policy issue.

Health Care Costs

Health care costs are the fastest growing segment of all state budgets. Medicaid is a state-administered program that provides health insurance for the poor, the blind, and disabled; it receives a lot of attention as legislatures wrestle to control those cost. But states also pay public employee and retiree insurance, school teachers' insurance, and provide health care for prisoners and those in mental facilities. Taken together, these costs are squeezing all state budgets and causing cuts in education and other human services.

The burden of increased health care cost is not limited to state budgets. Congress is struggling with the uncontrolled growth of Medicare and trying to figure out how to serve 45 million Americans who are currently uninsured. Nationally, health care represents 15 percent of America's GNP, almost double the rest of the world. Annual health care cost increases have been averaging 12 to 15 percent, double and triple the rate of inflation. This cost crunch will require the attention of policymakers for years to come.

On the positive side of the pending Baby Boomers' retirement is the fact that 50 percent of the current workforce will be eligible to retire in the next ten years, creating enormous employment opportunities for those who have the necessary skills. As Boomers age and spend more on health care, the impact will be felt in the economy as well. The health care industry is one of the most rapidly growing sectors of the economy. Health care jobs will be plentiful, with most specialties experiencing shortages. In many communities, if not most, health care is already the single largest employer. Furthermore, our mature manufacturing sector is at a significant disadvantage internationally as it competes against foreign competitors from countries that have tax-supported, national health insurance and therefore no health care cost associated with their products.

Economic Costs

While the legacy cost associated with the aging workforce burdens the manufacturing sector, there are three other trends impacting the overall economy.

Shift To Information and Service Economy

First, the U.S. is shifting from a manufacturing to an information and service economy. In 1950, 60 percent of jobs were available to the unskilled; by 2000 only 15 percent of jobs were available to the unskilled. Today, even the most basic employment requires higher math, science, and social skills. Manufacturing, the mainstay of the twentieth-century economy, is not going to disappear; but, through increased use of technology, it takes far fewer workers to produce more and higher-quality products. Manufacturing productivity increased dramatically in the last decade, while manufacturing employment continued to decline; that trend will continue. Additionally, the economy is becoming much more technological and workers more highly skilled. Having post-high school training, whether it be through a university, community college, or some skilled training, has become an absolute necessity. We have now added a new dimension to participation in our economy, dual literacy. You must be functionally literate—able to read, write, understand basic math—and technologically literate, meaning that you are comfortable with computers, robots, and other forms of technology. No longer will one be able to be a high school dropout and get a good job in the new and ever-changing, technological economy. The flip side of this new equation is the possibility of being dually illiterate, meaning that you are neither functionally literate—able to read and write—nor technologically literate, comfortable with computers, robots and technology. This dual illiteracy phenomenon is something we must come to understand and solve. With the aging of America and the pending retirement of an additional 77 million baby boomers, it is imperative that anybody who is able to work have the skills necessary to participate fully in the economy.

New Learning Fundamentals

Will Daggett, an international expert on education and the workforce, calls for "future basics." Professor Daggett believes that every student coming out of high school must have three years of technical reading and writing, at least two years of applied physics, a year of statistics, a year of logic, and at least one foreign language. These future basics are currently the norm in European and Asian high schools. These countries place a premium on science and math and have clear policies that encourage emerging and technical training in areas that America has lost ground in over the last few decades. This has serious policy implications for us all.

An International Workplace

A third way our economy is changing is that it is becoming international. In auto manufacturing, the Big Three are no longer General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler; the Big Three employers in Michigan are McDonald's, Wendy's, and Kentucky Fried Chicken. Toyota has already overtaken DaimlerChrysler and Ford and is challenging General Motors as the number-one automaker in the world. One out of six American workers currently works for a foreign-owned company. Thomas Friedman's hot selling book, *The World Is Flat*, is required reading in every Board Room in America and should be required reading for every American.

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So, key trends impacting policymakers on the national, state, and local levels are the aging of America and an economy that is shifting from manufacturing to one that is international, technological, and service based. While we have traditionally looked to the federal government for solutions to the complex problems facing our society, the locus has shifted to new regional configurations led by business leaders through nongovernmental organizations. This last feature creates enormous opportunities for participation, engagement, and impact on the local level.

Secondary Trends

Two other trends need to be highlighted.

Prison Growth

The first is the enormous growth in prison populations across America. The Department of Corrections has the fastest-growing budget in most states and is taking up a larger share of state spending. While it is good politics to be "tough on crime" and put more people in prison, the consequences must be understood. Policymakers are confronted with either raising taxes or making deep cuts in higher education, revenue sharing, health care, and other discretionary human service programs. Prisons are becoming a major public policy debate, which takes on a special edge when one considers that the people going to prison are basically young, poor, minority males. It is a national disgrace that more young, minority males are in prison or on parole than are enrolled in our institutions of higher education. It's cheaper to send a young person to Harvard than it is to send them to prison, yet the prison building goes on unabated. From a policy viewpoint, we know that these young, minority males have three things in common: they dropped out of school, have substance abuse problems, and, most importantly, were abused as children. With that knowledge, we ought to be able to develop public policy initiatives that reduce the crime rate, drop-out rate, substance-abuse rate, and child abuse rate. We must invest in these young people instead of destroying their ability to work and participate in this economy by putting them in prison. Which category of public policy do you think the prison debate revolves around? Good policy/good politics? Good policy/bad politics? Or bad policy/good politics? Knowing that 77 million baby boomers will retire in the next decade makes it imperative that we intervene early and make sure that everyone who is able gets the skill sets they need to participate in this increasingly complex, technological, and international economy. We simply cannot afford to have a generation of minority youth in prison and unproductive.

Growth of Tax Expenditures

The other trend that is going on in most legislative bodies across America is the growth of tax expenditures. Tax expenditures are special provisions enacted into the tax code that create special incentives, or loopholes, to exempt a particular service, business, or industry from the tax burden. While these tax expenditures can promote good policies—installing solar energy on your home, encouraging hydrogen cars, and facilitating home ownership, each loophole forfeits tax collection for that particular service or product, which means that the federal, state, or local budget must absorb cuts in other areas to make up for these lost revenues. Tax expenditures are second to prisons as the fastest growing part of state spending. Most importantly, they are not subject to periodic review nor to the annual budget process that we discussed earlier.

THE POLICY PROCESS

Democracy is not a spectator sport. So, let's shift gears and look at how elective bodies go about making policy and how an individual can impact that process. Think of elected bodies as large stadiums. In the arena are the *policymakers* who are armed with a tool called the *vote.* Each day the policymaker goes into the arena and struggles, debates, persuades, and eventually votes on the public *policy.*

The process is very open and participatory. Each day the legislature and the Congress publicize the issues that will be considered on that day. One can observe this process on cable television (e.g., C-SPAN) and see the reporting of the results through the traditional news media. What is not so obvious is the power and influence of other people who participate in the policymaking while sitting in the stands.

The Actors

Basically, there are three sets of actors or warriors who also participate in the policymaking process.

Special Interest Groups

First are the special interest groups. These groups generally represent a specific interest, business, or point of view. They are represented by sophisticated lobbyists who are armed with weapons as well. The lobbyist provides expert information that can be used to persuade policymakers to agree with their point of view. That information is also used to educate and inform the public of their point of view. Lobbyists also have enormous power because they have money to buy policymakers lunch, to entertain, to persuade, and to influence campaigns.

State Government Departments

The second set of warriors sitting in the balcony are the departments of state government. Each department has a "legislative liaison" whose job it is to follow the process and educate the policymakers and the public. The departmental legislative liaison's powerful tool is expert information, which is supposed to be neutral, not self-serving, and in the best interest of the entire community.

Consumers, Citizens, and Taxpayers

The third set of warriors are the consumers, interested citizens, and the taxpayers. Some groups are organized and sophisticated, like Common Cause, the National Rifle Association, and the senior citizen network, AARP. All kinds of citizens groups organize to follow, observe, and participate in the policymaking process. The power of this warrior group is seen in their ability to generate large numbers of people who are informed, get actively involved in the policy process, and vote regularly.

Policy Into Law

When all three groups agree—the special interest groups, the department liaison, and the consumer groups—their power coalesces around the policy, and it becomes law. It is good politics and generally good policy if all three of these groups are in agreement. Unfortunately, these groups don't always agree nor get along with each other; they are often at odds.

An effective policymaker will work to get at least two of the three groups to support the evolving consensus or compromise policy. The politics are to at least get the special interests and the consumers on the same page. The departments and the expert "neutral" information they represent do not carry the same weight as the well-financed lobbyists representing the special interest and the powerful influence of organized consumers who vote. Power is the bottom line!

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The most important point that can be made is that the democratic process is a participatory process; it works best when all of the interests are involved and engaged and part of the process. If consumers and taxpayers get discouraged—give up and walk away from the policymaking process—power goes by default to the special interests. Thomas Jefferson once said that "The best cure for an ailing democracy is more democracy." Democracy is best served by getting people involved, organized, and focused.

APPENDIX

T̲his section provides a recipe on organizing for citizen involvement.

ON ORGANIZING—WHAT CAN JOHN Q. CITIZEN DO?

How then do citizens and community leaders at the grassroots level organize most effectively to influence the multi-faceted policy and political system described in this primer? The table below provides a simple recipe for social change, complete with ingredients and directions.

A Simple Recipe for Social Change

Ingredients	Directions
Credibility	Be there
Assumptions	Be informed
Commitment	Be able to count
Power	Don't be intimidated
Hope	Don't take "no" for an answer
Courage	Follow through
Goals	

A Definition (Defining Our Terms)

The verb "organize" as defined by Webster means: "to provide with an organic structure; systematize; to arrange; establish; institute; bring into being; to unify into a coordinated functioning whole." This Primer seeks to expand this definition to a more practical level, by providing down-to-earth suggestions for individuals who want to become involved and who want to learn and practice the simple skills needed when organizing any group to achieve specific goals.

Two Popular Myths (Dispelling Myths)

You need large numbers to be effective: False.
Most groups revolve around a small core of individuals who have the trust of the larger group. The core group must learn how to build coalitions and be able to draw on larger numbers at the appropriate time. Don't be discouraged if only a small group shows up to key

meetings. The important thing is not to exclude anyone from the core group and to learn when and how to involve the less committed allies. For those people who miss meetings, keep them involved and up-to-date with phone calls and mailings. The smallness of a group becomes a liability only if it remains small and/or is unable to develop coalitions.

You must have special training to be able to organize a group: False.
Some of the most savvy and effective organizers are grassroots people who know the wishes of the community and can articulate them. The key to leadership is gaining and keeping the trust of the group. This is accomplished by working with the group—not for them.

The Bottom Line: Your Credibility

To organize, you must identify and bring together a core group of individuals. The core group has basically two initial tasks:

1. To clearly develop a focus or set of goals
2. To decide how to expand the group to represent as many viewpoints as possible so that the group's legitimacy and credibility cannot be challenged.

The makeup of your group will, of course, help shape your goals; a group's membership and its goals usually shift somewhat over time.

Assumptions

Before the group can develop a focus or a set of goals, it is important to state the assumptions the group might share.

First, when dealing with institutions (e.g., government agencies), it is helpful to keep in mind the Peter Principle (Lawrence J. Peter. *The Peter Principle.* W. Morrow Publishers, 1969): Large, organizations develop bureaucratic hierarchies or "pyramids of power." People are often promoted to positions of power beyond their level of competence. In other words, just because they have impressive-sounding titles, don't assume they know what they are talking about!

Second, our society is organized into institutions that were initially set up to achieve some special social goals. It is always a smart strategy to accept at face value that stated goal of each institution as a legitimate ideal you can embrace, if that goal is consistent with the social change your group wants to achieve. The key to your success in changing the real policies and practices of that institution depends on how effectively you can demonstrate the institution's failure to meet its own stated goal, thereby diminishing or destroying its legitimacy. You then can demonstrate how your group can do the job more effectively and, hopefully, at a lower cost.

Legitimacy and Those Who Have It Are the Keys to Change

Once you have effectively exposed the institution for its inability to achieve its own stated goals, the institution has basically two alternatives:

1. To make changes to achieve the goal
2. To become defensive and attack your group.

Most institutions will initially resist change, especially if it is initiated from within. If they do begin to change, be on guard. Your group could be co-opted or sandbagged when a policymaker gives superficial lip service to your suggestion but has no intention of implementing policy or change. Your group, thinking they have won, will become diffused and apathetic—losing interest even though the critical work of implementing the change will require continued oversight and pressure. Quick success is almost always fatal to a community group!

If the institution reacts defensively and begins to attack your group, it means you have hit a sensitive point and are on the right track. You can be sure you have become a threat when the institution begins to challenge your group's credibility. You must expect this kind of attack and not become defensive. You can judge the merit of your recommended change by the intensity of the institutional attack. The more defensive and hostile their response to you and your group, the more on target you are. You should move ahead aggressively.

Two Kinds of Commitment

It is always important to remember that there are two levels of involvement and commitment to any movement for change. On one level is the emotional commitment—the feeling that something is wrong and the desire to do something to change it. There is also the intellectual level personified by a well-read, knowledgeable, thoughtful individual. A group needs both levels of commitment to be effective.

1. Those with the emotional commitment are the traditional activists.

   They are highly motivated and are anxious "to get involved" to try to change conditions. They normally have little historical perspective and are unable to articulate the group goals. They are often, but not always, hot heads and can be an embarrassment to your group. They are important to your group, but must learn to subordinate their own interests to those of the larger group.

2. The intellectual level requires individuals who understand the historical significance of the change being advocated.

   These people have a sophisticated understanding of the interrelationships, the nuances and the subtleties of the situation. Unfortunately, many intellectuals are unable to translate the thought into action and, therefore, are not helpful to a group. The ideal group leader has both an emotional and intellectual commitment (e.g., Martin Luther King, Jr., and Caesar Chavez) and can harness the energy of the emotions and the thoughtfulness of the intellect to give direction to a group. Unfortunately, few groups have such unique individuals as leaders. It is, therefore, the leader's task to be sure that both the emotional and intellectual commitment is present in the group. An over-reliance on either will lead to a poorly thought out strategy and subsequent clumsy attempts at change or what may be called "paralysis by analysis"—all thought and no action. Either result can be disastrous and counter productive because it makes future attempts to organize much more difficult.

Forms of Power

Now that you have identified a core group, goals and others who share your interest, it is time to consider what kinds of power you and your group can bring to the coming struggle.

It is important to recognize that when you advocate change, you take on special interests that will be threatened by a change. Usually the special interest groups have a great deal of influence, often by default, because they possess an abundance of a few types of power: money, knowledge and personal relationships with the policymakers.

Special interest groups are not necessarily sinister in their use of power. They use money to contribute to policymaker campaigns, to hire lobbyists, to wine-and-dine and to develop detailed materials to document their particular need(s). Special interests can and do play an important role in policymaking. Community groups can learn a great deal from observing how they utilize power to affect public policy.

Community groups do not have the money to compete with special interests; therefore, they must seek to use other kinds of power. A core group of organizers must learn to mobilize other types of power.

1. **Numbers Are Power**

   Policymakers (e.g., city council members, legislators) are very concerned about large numbers of voters, especially if they are upset. It is important that you identify other groups that agree with your goals and who are willing to show up to a meeting on behalf of your interests. Numbers give you additional legitimacy and credibility.

   Policymakers continually assess the impact of what they are doing or plan to do. They are extremely sensitive to organized groups. The larger and more diverse the group, the more likely that it will be taken seriously. Seek ways to expand your group. The group, however, must have well-established goals and strategies, or it will become divided and ineffective.

2. **Coalitions Are Power**

   Although your group might be small, you probably can find others who share your concerns. Expanding the numbers of a group involves building coalitions; coalitions involve bringing together diverse groups to work toward a common goal. It is important to identify the goals because there will be area where the various coalition members disagree. The group must learn to agree on the goals and agree to disagree on the areas of difference.

3. **Unity Is Power**

   A large, diverse group presenting a unified position before a city council or a legislative committee has power. Be careful. Choose wisely the person who speaks for your coalition in public meetings. If the spokesperson gets excited, exaggerates a point or gives misinformation, a smart policymaker will seize upon the occasion to destroy the credibility of all of the information and may discredit the entire group as well. Should

the group seek to defend the misstatement, it risks its own credibility. However, if the group disassociates itself from the spokesperson or information presented the group may become divided and ineffective. Do not let this happen! Unity is essential to maintain your legitimacy and credibility. Disunity equals powerlessness.

4. Positions Are Power

It is important to bring to your group people who hold important, credible positions in your community. Bankers, educators, business people, community leaders and clergy give your group legitimacy. Try to involve them in your group.

5. Knowledge Is Power

Two kinds of knowledge are essential to affect public policy:

First, you must be knowledgeable about the process of decision-making. Each public body has rules and policies that describe how decisions are made. Get the rules. Learn them. Remember there are also informal rules. Get to know those, too. Then monitor the meetings and impact the decisions at the appropriate time.

Second, you must be knowledgeable about the issue you represent. Study and understand the issue. Do not exaggerate or misrepresent the facts. Develop good information. Policymakers will learn to trust you and eventually will depend on you for facts.

6. Relationships Are Power

It is always helpful to know the legislator, city councilperson, or county commissioner personally. Don't be afraid to help on a campaign or volunteer to work in a policymaker's office. Development of a personal relationship with the policymaker will give you access and credibility. You should get to know key policymakers to such a degree that you feel comfortable calling them or visiting their offices. You will know that you have power and influence with policymakers when they return your phone calls.

It is also helpful to know that each policymaker has a hidden advisor—some trusted friend or associate who meets regularly with the policymaker and has an inordinate amount of influence on the policymaker's thinking and judgment. You can save yourself and your group a lot of trouble if you get to know that hidden advisor, working to gain this person's trust. This person can do more for your group over a cup of coffee than you and your group can do in months of organizing. The hidden advisor must feel comfortable with you and perceive your group as a broadly based coalition of knowledgeable people who can impact the process if necessary. Hidden advisors can become important allies and key parts of your strategy. Get to know them.

7. Voting Is Power

Elected policymakers listen to voters. Be sure you are registered and vote. Be sure that all of your coalition members are voters and willing to vote as a block.

8. **Use of the Media Is Power**

   Policymakers dislike bad publicity. You must learn how to develop literature, talk to the press, go on radio, and speak before cameras so you can get your message across. Policymakers will go out of their way to avoid bad press if they can, so don't be afraid to use the media.

9. **Money Is Power**

   Although most citizens' groups are at a monetary disadvantage, they must have some funds to develop materials, pay for mailings and keep other members of the coalition informed. You will not be able to compete financially with special interests, but if you have the other elements of power, you can overcome the power of money. No group, however, can function without some funds!

10. **The Internet Is New Power**

   In the 20 years since I originally developed this organizing "recipe," a new ingredient has appeared that is showing remarkable ability to inform and influence policy and policymakers—The World Wide Web. It is a tool that puts information and organizing ability in the hands of real people who would be wise to make sure the other ingredients are on the table when cooking up their plans for social change. The Internet is changing our concept of "community" and extending our reach in ways that were unimaginable, or certainly much more difficult to achieve, before its advent. New strategies and lessons learned will come from a new generation of organizers for whom this tool has become a vital channel for change.

These ten elements of power, if used in combination, will more than offset the special interest groups. No smart public officials will disregard the wishes of a large, unified coalition of knowledgeable voters who have expressed a specific interest to them. The power of money usually will dwindle as the organized community group becomes more knowledgeable, assertive and effective.

The Four Key Ingredients

Once your group is formed—a process that might take weeks or months—four elements must be present before the group can take any action. If one of the four is missing, the group will exhibit the classic defense mechanisms—rationalizing, back stabbing, scapegoating, forming more committee(s)—to avoid taking action. The four essential ingredients are:

Hope: The group must believe that all the effort, time, and toil will result in some changes.

Courage: The group must be willing to "risk" the confrontation.

Goals: The group must clearly understand what it is that is being changed.

Strategy: The group must clearly understand how the goal is to be achieved.

As a group leader, one must be constantly aware of the dynamic of the group. If and when the group begins to backstab, rationalize, scapegoat, or turn on itself, it is the leader's task to assess which of the four ingredients is missing and to "plug in" the missing one.

Making It Happen

Once the group has become a group, has identified its goals, and has decided to take an action, follow these six simple rules to achieve maximum results:

1. **Be There**

    "Being there" means finding out when and where the real decisions are made and then getting the appropriate people to that meeting. This might mean having one person monitor a meeting for several weeks just to know what is going on and then, at the appropriate time, bringing in the larger group. "Being there" means making a commitment to understanding the system. Nothing is more frustrating than being at the right place at the wrong time or at the wrong place and missing the real decision.

2. **Be Informed**

    It is important that the group be legitimate. This means developing accurate information and presenting it in the most rational way. Even the slightest exaggeration or smallest piece of misinformation can discredit the group and destroy its legitimacy. When developing specific information for policymakers, assume that they are intelligent but uniformed. Remember, they have more than one issue to be concerned about. It is a mistake to assume they know or care about yours.

    - Be prepared to be challenged on your data. Make sure it is accurate.
    - Develop a network for information-gathering that is quick and responsive. Once you have established your credibility, you will be called upon again and again.

3. **Be Able to Count**

    This is a democratic society—the majority rules. The group must know the number needed to pass a resolution, law ordinance or policy. They must know policymakers' stands on issues that concern them and develop arguments that will appeal to the voters. (This might entail compromise, which every group should consider as part of their strategy.) Remember, policymakers can also count. It is therefore important to demonstrate that your group is legitimate—well-informed and broadly based. At some point in the process, you may need to produce large numbers of allies to demonstrate your broad base of support, and to do this you must build coalitions.

4. **Don't Be Intimidated**

    Intentionally or not, the system is intimidating. To personally visit a key policymaker, you may have to go through two assistants and three doors—and then confront a huge, overpowering, walnut desk that separates you from the policymaker. During official meetings, the policymakers sit together, usually on a raised platform, surrounding themselves with "experts" from the bureaucracy. If you wish to address the group, you must "come down front" and stand before them—alone—speaking into a microphone that distorts your voice, increasing your discomfort. Don't be intimidated by all of this. If you are informed, if you have the votes, and if your support group shows up, you will find that your fears soon disappear.

5. **Don't Take "No" For An Answer**

   You should never expect a new idea, no matter how logical or reasonable, to be accepted on its face value the first time it is presented. Instead, you should anticipate all of the hostile questions and expect to be turned down initially. In fact, if your idea is accepted up front, without much resistance, there probably will be no real change. It may mean that the policymakers are going to sandbag your proposal—by giving lip service to your idea with no intention of implementing it. In general, the more the resistance, the better the idea. Be prepared to dig in and follow through because it takes a major commitment of time and energy to fully implement a new policy.

   As you monitor implementation, it is important to show how your idea fits into the goals articulated by this particular institution and how your idea can do the job more effectively or at lower cost. You can often avoid the "it will cost more" argument by saying, "we don't expect more money but rather hope to 'reorder priorities.'"

6. **Follow Through**

   All of the group's efforts can be lost if you fail to follow through. In fact, you can be co-opted by an easy victory since the group will tend to dissolve after reaching its goal. Within weeks or months, things will be back to normal and you'll find it difficult, if not impossible, to get the group back together.

Conclusion

Community change means a commitment to the long haul—to the process. Don't be confused with winning and losing. Many times, winning in the short term really means losing in the long run. Conversely, losing is often best for the group. After a period of time, a group leader will learn that it is the process of continually participating in change and the integrity of the people who participate in that process that is most important, not winning or losing a few skirmishes.

Finally, never lose your humanity in order to save humanity. One of the most important assets of a change agent is a sense of humor. Learn to laugh at yourself and with others. Strive to make this world a better place to live, work, and love. In doing so, remember that no single issue—no matter how important it may seem today—is as important as your commitment to each other and your commitment to the integrity of the process.

About the Author

David C. Hollister is President and CEO of Prima Civitas Foundation, a nonprofit organization, begun in 2006 and based in Lansing, that takes a regional approach to boosting Michigan's economy. The former mayor of Lansing, Hollister was appointed as Director of the Michigan Department of Consumer and Industry Services (CIS) in January 2003 by Governor Jennifer M. Granholm. On December 8, 2003, CIS joined with the Michigan Department of Career Development, Michigan Economic Development Corporation, and Michigan Broadband Development Authority to form the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth. Under Hollister's leadership, this new department addressed labor, economic growth, and urban development issues in Michigan.

Hollister has dedicated his entire life to public service. He began his career as a high school teacher in the 1960s after graduating with honors from Michigan State University. His political career began during his tenure as a teacher in the Lansing Public Schools, when in 1968, he was elected as an Ingham County Commissioner, serving through 1974.

In 1974, Hollister launched a successful campaign for the Michigan House of Representatives, where he served until 1993. He quickly became recognized as one of the top ten legislators, serving on the powerful Appropriations Committee for 16 years and chairing the Appropriations Subcommittee on Social Services for over a decade.

In 1993, Hollister ran a successful campaign for Mayor of the City of Lansing and was re-elected to his third term in a landslide victory in November 2001. Hollister's successes as mayor include over $2.9 billion in investments, including building a new regional transportation center downtown, bringing minor league baseball to Lansing, and striking a partnership with the State of Michigan that involves new buildings for the Legislature, the Supreme Court, and various other departments. In addition, regional partnerships were created with local governments to enable location of a major insurance company's corporate world headquarters in Lansing, to develop a new golf course, and to build an upscale housing development. One of Mayor Hollister's most exciting successes was the commitment by General Motors to consolidate operations and build two new state-of-the-art assembly plants in Lansing.

The Prima Civitas is a nonprofit organization established in 2006 that supports economic and workforce development strategies in mid-Michigan and serves as a broker to accelerate deals and technology transfer that will yield positive job growth in next-generation firms across the region. Prima Civitas focuses on the transportation, energy, agriculture-based biomass, healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and homeland security industries.

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