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# Tools for Citizen Advocacy



By  
Tom “Smitty” Smith

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Public Citizen derives its name from  
Learned Hand-

a former Supreme Court Justice once was  
asked to run for President

“There is no higher office in the land than that  
of the public citizen- the citizen that  
participates fully in the decisions made by  
local governments that affect their lives”

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# Tools of a Citizen Activist

- Problem Assessment
- Research
- Media
- Organizing
- Lobbying
- Reporting on votes
- Accountability
- Volunteering
- Elections

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# Political Cycle

- Every Two Years
  - Congress
  - TX House
  - Some County Commissioners
  - Some City Council Members
- Every Four Years
  - President
  - Governor
  - State Senate
- Every Six Years
  - US Senate



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# Choose and Document the Problem

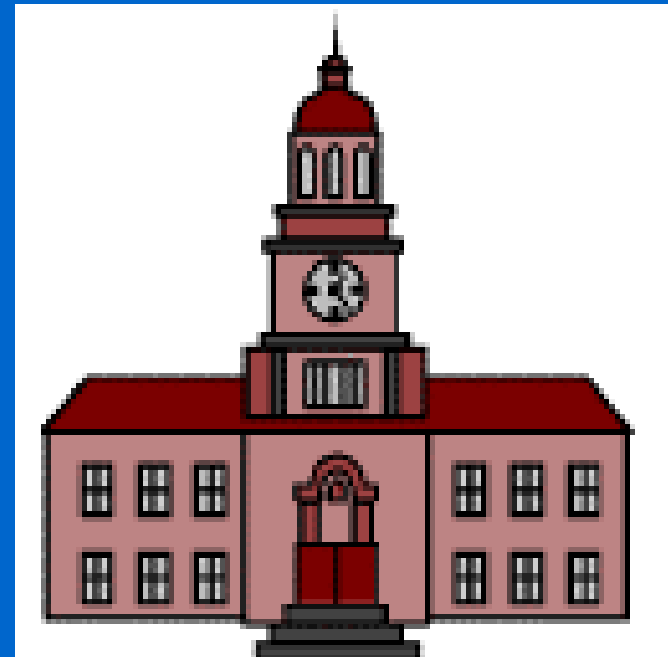
- How bad is it
  - Texas Vs Other States
  - Our Community
- Examples
- Imbalances
  - sex
  - age
  - geographic



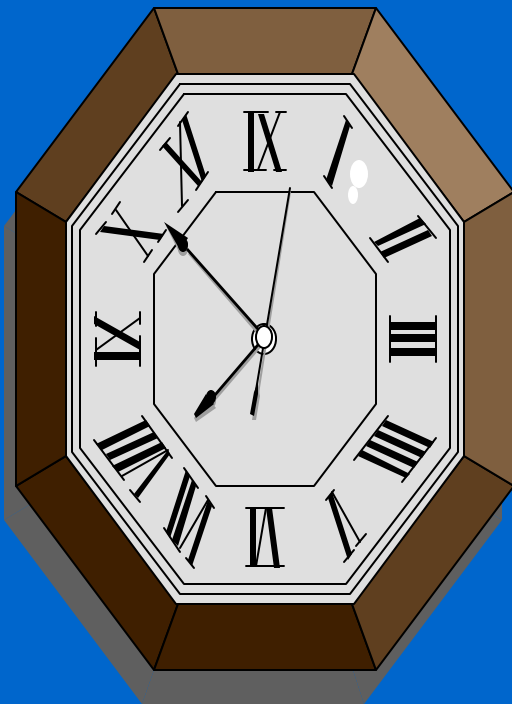
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# Research Tools

- **Government Agencies-- e.g. EPA**
- **Other agencies**
  - legislative studies
  - interim committees
  - auditors
  - budgets
- **Universities**
- **NGOs**
- **Surveys**



# Timing



- New Issue
- Reauthorization
- Sunset
- Interim Committee
- State Agency studies
- Budget Cycle

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# Reporting Your Findings

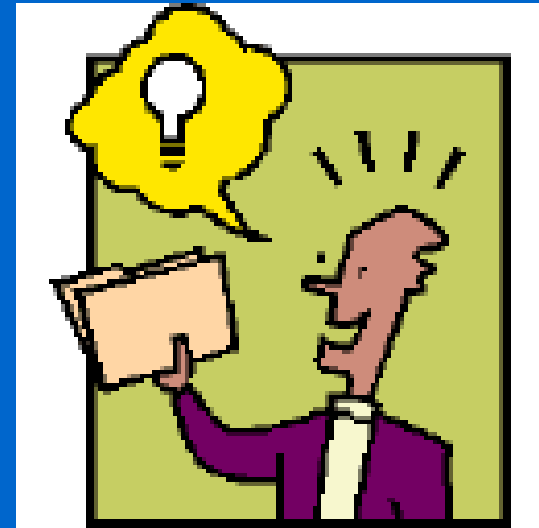
- *Who is your Audience*
- Public
- Media
- Policy Makers
  - Congress
  - Legislators
  - Regulators
  - Donors



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# Message

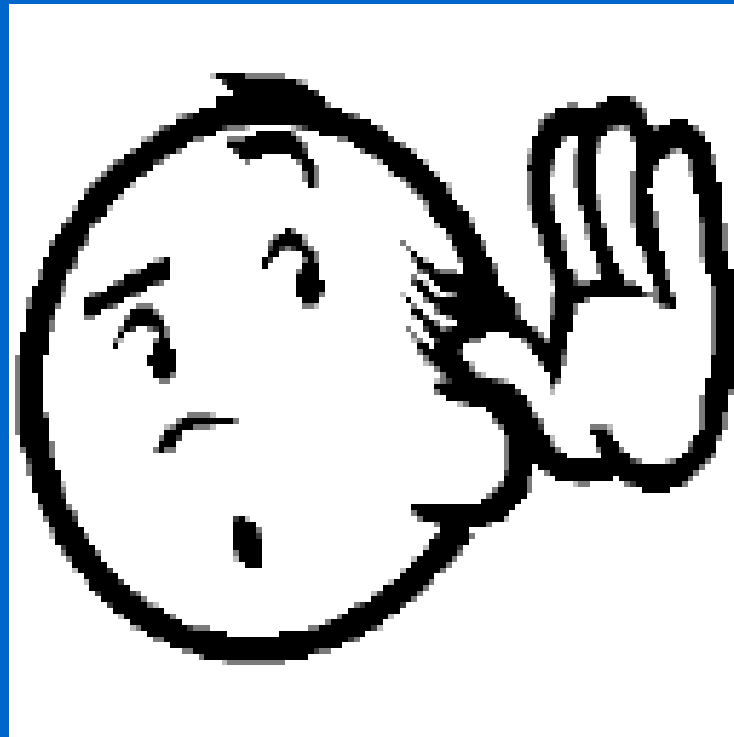
- Problem
- Solution
- What Can You ( the listener) Do



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# Power Mapping

- Who does your target actor listen to?



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# Power Mapping

- Voters
- Donors
- Local political leaders
  - mayor
  - judge
  - party
- Church leaders
- Media
- Business associates
- Trade associations
- Other lobbyists
- Fellow members of legislative body
- Potential opponents
- Volume of Constituent Letters & Calls
- Polling

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# Supporters/Opponents

## Who benefits?

- citizens
- groups
- businesses
- associations
- charities
- experts
- tax impact

## Who opposes?

- citizens
- groups
- businesses
- associations
- competitors
- experts
- tax impact -on who

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# Organizing

- list supporters
- go to the top of each allied group
- go to their meetings
- get mailing list
- build a small group of leaders- 4-5
- set your own meeting with others

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# Letter Writing

- Problems
  - data
  - example
- Solutions
  - what other states/cities have done
- What you can do
  - sponsor
  - amend
  - vote for
- Content varies by time
  - before election
  - please introduce, cosponsor
  - vote for -or amend
- What works
  - Handwritten
  - differing emails
- What doesn't
  - cards, duplicate letters
  - identical faxes

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# Media

*Where do you get your news?*

- Newspaper
- Radio
- TV
- Web
- Gossip



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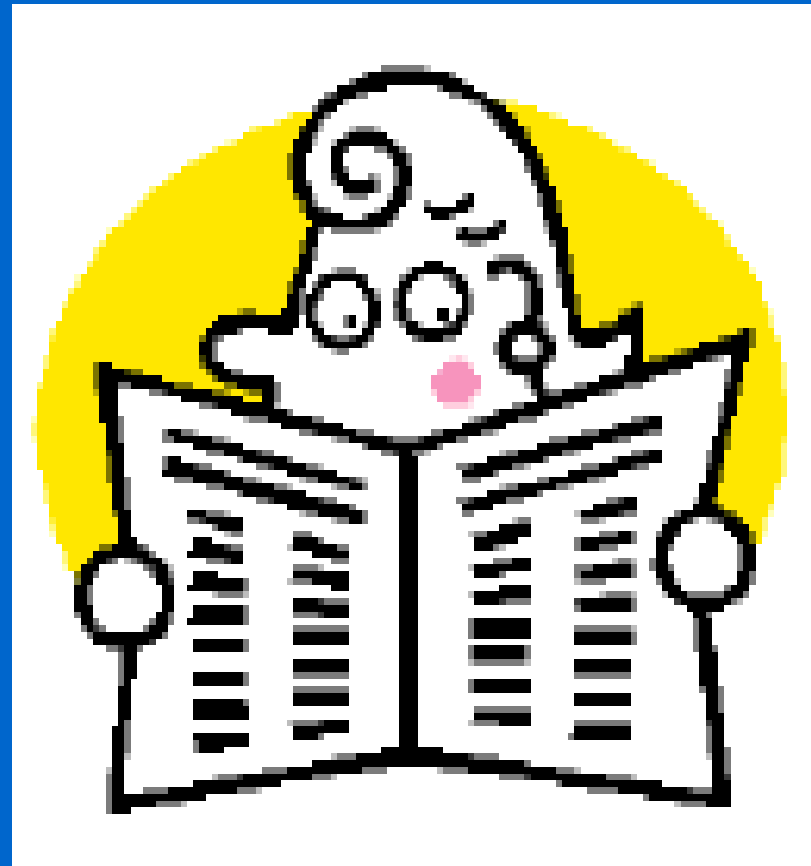
## Anatomy of a Story

- Anchor -Intro- 5-10 sec
- Newscaster 5-15 sec
- Talking head- you 10-30sec
- Response- them 10-30sec
- Newscaster- expert 5-10 sec
- Anchor-readout 5 sec

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# Newspaper story

- Hook
- Summary
- Proponents
- Opponents
- Background
- Experts
- Conclusions



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# Press Release

- Intro
  - Hook /line/ and sinker  
(Read by Anchor)
- Summary
  - Problem/Solution/What You Can Do  
(Your TV or radio message-10-45 sec)
- 3 top arguments
- Opponents say- Our Counters
- Experts (who you'd like to see quoted)
- Conclusions (what you'd like the last word to be)

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## Other media

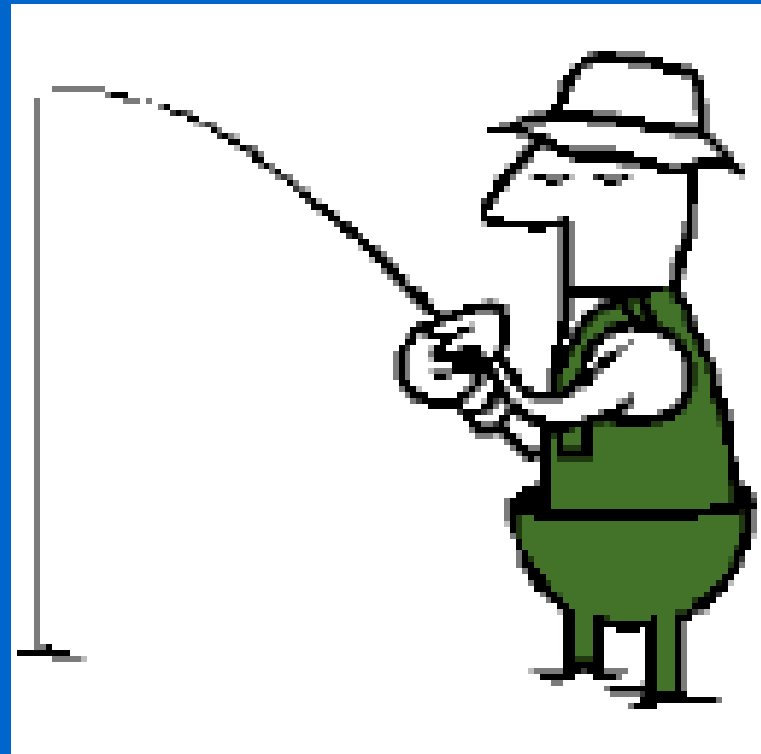
- Letter to the editor
- Op eds.
- Small papers
- Radio talk shows
- Newsletters
- Community radio and TV



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# Lobbying

- It's like fishing
  - hook
  - line
  - sinker
- Best fishing holes
  - office
  - committee
  - halls
  - church
  - coffee shops
  - events



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# Lobbying Techniques

- Best “hook” lines are 60 seconds or less
  - problem- hook’em with an example
  - solution
  - what you can do
- If they bite give the long version
  - at the end of the conversation:
  - ask “Can we count on your support?”
  - if they say no ask them if there are other questions you can answer or info you can provide
  - get back with them

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# Hearings

- Explain problem
- How does this bill fix it - or fail to
- show a variety of supporters
- give examples
- answer questions
- build record for regulators, courts
- divide the issues



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## You Can Make a Difference

- The only thing that ever beats organized money is organized people
- Small groups of people can make something a statewide or national issue
  - renewables
  - power plant clean ups
- Remember-Our government is for and by the people- not the Corporations and donors