

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING WITH YOUR LEGISLATORS

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AGENDA

What is the Problem?

Reaching out to your Oregon legislators

Reaching out to congressional representatives

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

What is a special district?

Misconceptions

- Special districts are part of a city or county
- Special districts get their funding from the State or other local governments
- Special districts aren't government entities
- Special districts don't have elected boards
- Special districts aren't accountable to the public

Special districts don't have a national presence in the nation's capital

No nationwide special district association

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

- CARES Act
 - Special districts were not included in the definition of local governments
 - Only Oregon and Colorado special districts received funds.
 - Oregon special districts were able to obtain \$25 million from the State
 - Cites and counties actively lobbied against special districts receiving any funds

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

- ARP Act
 - Act allowed states, cities and counties to share their money with special districts
 - Representative DeFazio and Senator Wyden were supportive of districts
 - Frustrating calls with some congressional staff from across the country
 - Oregon cities and counties received \$1.5 billion directly from the federal government – “Generational Impact”
 - Special districts received \$0 directly from federal government
 - The State decided not to share any of its funds with special districts even though a priority was to assist “disadvantaged rural communities”
 - Approximately 50 special districts did receive funds for specific projects from their individual legislators

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

SDAO Member Calls to Action

- Less than 100 out of 1,000 members responded
- Input from legislators that they didn't hear from special districts
- Some districts didn't feel impacted, so they didn't join in

Timing and Lack of Authority to Act

- Things moved very quickly requiring a quick notice from SDAO and quick response by members
- Many districts indicated they couldn't respond without board approval which could take weeks or even months
- Many special districts felt they needed to send formal signed letters

WHAT IS THE SOLUTION

Build relationships with your legislators and congressional staff

Collective action – respond even if it doesn't directly impact you

Get advanced authority to act

Educate your constituents and your political leadership about what you do

LEGISLATIVE OUTREACH

Why should you invest the time building a relationship with your state legislators:

- They need to know the value you bring to your community
- You may need assistance with a state agency
- You may want legislation passed, stopped, or amended that may impact your district or other districts
- Your district may need money for a project that your district would like the Legislature to fund or to get support while seeking funds from executive departments

LEGISLATIVE OUTREACH

When should you begin building a relationship?

- The best time to begin this process is when they are not in legislation session – what do I mean by that?

How should you begin building a relationship?

- Many legislators host town hall meetings, district meetings and other special events in their districts when the legislature is not in session
- Attend these meetings and introduce yourself. Many of these have become virtual
- Go meet them at their office and introduce yourself
- Get to know their staff
- Invite them for a tour of your district
- Invite them to a board meeting
- Invite them to one of your community events
- Get to know their backgrounds and the committees they serve on

SDAO ASSISTANCE

- Training
- Model resolution for quick legislative response
- Improved communication methods for reaching members
- Provide members with public relations tools
- Increase the awareness of special districts
- Legislative Action Toolkit – sdao.com
- Invest in the National Special Districts Coalition

Legislative Action Toolkit



NSDC
NATIONAL SPECIAL DISTRICTS COALITION

FEDERAL ADVOCACY