

Notes from March 12, 2017 Workshop, Promoting UU Values through Advocacy convened by the Social Justice Coordinating Committee

Reverend Beth opened the workshop with a reading and Rich Rominger lit the chalice. Workshop speakers were Don Saylor, Lucas Frerichs and Rich Rominger. They were asked to speak about what is effective advocacy.

Saylor emphasized three points: 1.) know your song/issue, 2.) know your audience, and 3.) be strategic. He recommended the following:

1. **Know your song well before you start singing.**

- BE SMART.
 - know your issue inside and out.
 - have facts.
 - have a story.
 - know the opposing views and how to counter them.
- Know your core values; at the same time be willing to work out compromises that do not sacrifice those core values.
 - Example: 1991 Davis elementary school attendance boundaries.
- What is your ask? Be specific.

2. **Know your audience**

- What do they care about?
- Whom do they listen to?
- What moves them?
- Quantity of input can help, but make each contact unique.
- Learn your audience's favorite means of gathering information and use it.
- Who are your allies on this issue? On other issues?

3. **Be strategic**

- Think beyond current issue or "transaction"—sometimes you need to make a "swap" that involves another issue entirely.
- Some issues play out over multiple iterations; a series of small victories may be possible when one large one is not.
- Build relationships.
- Don't give up and don't take NO for an answer when it matters.
- Plan for next election.

Frerichs shared ten points for effective advocacy.

1. Meet With Your Elected Official. During recess, make an appointment to meet with your Elected Official (or their legislative staff) in their district offices. Or attend a town hall meeting or other district meeting that your Elected Official may hold. Consider inviting them to events you're involved with, where they may interact with many constituents.

2. Research the Issue Before You Arrive. Become familiar with your issue and determine your strongest arguments. Try to think of personal or local examples to support your arguments. And, if there is a specific bill or piece of legislation you plan to discuss, you should know the number and/or the name of the bill.

3. Know Your Legislator. Research your legislator's position on your issue and tailor your arguments to that position. Also try to demonstrate how your issue affects your legislator and his or her constituency and district.

4. If You Are Going in a Group, Provide a Range of Support. Try to bring a diverse group, so that people can represent different perspectives. Show the legislator that all of you agree on the issue, even though you may reach that agreement for different reasons.

5. Agree on Talking Points and Game plan for the Meeting- Beforehand! Make a list of key arguments ahead of time and if you can't agree on a point, leave it out altogether. Talk before the meeting and decide who will discuss which talking point. Also, decide who will start the conversation.

6. Always Give Your Best Arguments. If you know a legislator agrees with you on an issue, it's still valuable for him or her to know that his or her constituents support his or her stand on an issue. If you know a legislator disagrees with you on an issue, it's still important for him or her to know that some of his or her constituents don't like the stand he or she has chosen on that issue. Sometimes just knowing that there's a vocal minority may cause a legislator to rethink his or her position.

7. Bring Up Personal or Professional Connections and Provide Personal and Local Examples. Be sure to bring up any connections, such as memberships in the same community organizations, common contacts or previous meetings. You can also take the opportunity to thank the legislator for previous votes or actions that he or she has taken that you supported. Personal stories and connections help your legislators better remember you and your issues.

8. Don't Be Afraid to Say, "I don't know." During your visit, you may encounter a question that you cannot answer. Fear not! It's okay to admit you don't know the answer. You can simply let them know you will find out the answer and then get back to his or her office with the information requested. Whatever you do, never pretend you know something if you do not. Legislators will appreciate honesty, your willingness to find an answer to their questions and your commitment to the issue at hand. (It also provides you with the perfect opportunity to get back in touch with them again about the issue.)

9. Leave Materials and Contact Information. Leave a few pages (not too many or it is too overwhelming) of information, such as recent editorials, letters of support from advocacy organizations or a Fact Sheet/talking points.

10. Send a Thank-You Letter. Promptly send a personal letter thanking the legislator or staff member for meeting with you. Include your main talking points, commitments that were made,

and attach any additional information (this also provides another opportunity to have contact with them).

Rominger's experiences were administrative, rather than legislative. His appointments at the CA Department of Food and Agriculture and the United States Department of Agriculture led him to note:

- the significance of working on budgets
- the significance of working on regulations (that often implement legislation).

He also pointed out that bipartisanship should still be pursued, and he urged working with the many excellent existing organizations that share our values.

The following issues of concern were identified by the attendees:

Citizens United
Climate research (cuts in)
Education: public and private
Electoral process
Environmental protection
Health care
Homelessness
Immigration; fear of deportation
Intolerance, increase in
Mental health parity
Police Action, detention and private prisons
Refugees
State Department reduction
Violence, increase in

Currently, UUCD justice ministries address homelessness through the Interfaith Winter Rotating Shelter and Davis Community Meals; the Social Justice Coordinating Committee hopes to convene a meeting soon about Tiny House efforts underway in Woodland and Davis. At the workshop it was announced that the SJCC in conjunction with other committees is likely to convene discussions about immigration and sanctuary after the March 15 Interfaith meeting on sanctuary.

The chairs of the Social Justice Coordinating Committee invite individuals interested in discussing forming a justice leadership team at UUCD to work on any of the above new issues to contact them. Robin Datel (rddd@dcn.davis.ca.us); Stefan Harvey, stefh2002@yahoo.com.

The Co-chairs of the Social Justice Coordinating Committee will keep these issues in mind over the coming weeks, and when possible, will forward information about organizations addressing these issues.

Attendees (and all at UUCD) are urged to sign the UUA/UUSC Declaration of Conscience. To sign the Declaration, go to www.uua.org. The Social Justice Coordinating Committee will hold a meeting prior to the UUCD annual meeting (June 4) to discuss UUCD signing the Declaration as a congregation. This question, shall UUCD sign the Declaration, will be voted on at the annual meeting.

Reverend Beth concluded the workshop with closing readings.

The fact sheet, Tools for Education and Advocacy, distributed at the workshop follows.

Tools for Education and Advocacy

Resisting

Yolo Indivisible: www.facebook.com/indivisibleyolo/

Taking Action/Influencing Elected Officials

MoveOn: <http://front.moveon.org/about-moveon-political-action/#.WMVvfvLdfW0>

Planned Parenthood: pplonline@ppfa.org

Daily Action: <https://dailyaction.org>

5 Calls: <https://5calls.org>

Wall of Us: <https://www.wall-of-us.org/>

Electoral Politics

Sister District Project: <https://www.sisterdistrict.com>

Swing Left: <https://swingleft.org/> (take back the House)

Emily's List: www.emilyslist.org/

Information and Analyses

UUA: www.uua.org/

UUSC: www.uusc.org/

UU College of Social Justice: <http://uucsj.org/>

UU Justice Ministry of CA: <http://uujmca.org/>

Sierra Club of CA: www.sierraclub.org/california (environmental issues in CA; bills in CA Legislature)

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities: www.cbpp.org, (federal budget, tax and domestic safety net programs)

Alliance for Justice: www.afj.org/ (Supreme Court nomination)