



Overview

Over the last decade the agenda of progressive and union groups has experienced a paradigm shift in how to implement policy initiatives. Instead of introducing and passing legislative items at the federal and state branches of government, they have been forced to focus their attention and energy on local municipalities to pass ordinances and other policy changes.

The shift has occurred as the political landscape at the state and federal levels has been altered significantly. Congress' lack of being able to pass almost any legislation has created gridlock at the federal level that makes advancing any issue a challenge. Legislative gridlock has become more common at the state legislative level, making it harder for advocates of an issue to pass statewide laws or rule changes.

In addition, the political make-up of Congress and a number of state legislatures have dramatically change. Most are now under GOP control, making it increasingly more difficult to pass progressive agenda items.

After the 2016 elections:

- Republican control of state legislatures increased by 43 seats across the country.
- 68 state legislative chambers were under GOP control, while Democrats held majorities in just 31.
- Going into the 2018 election, Republicans control both bodies of the United States Congress with 51 Senate seats and an advantage of 24 House of Representatives seats.

Changing focus to local municipalities – how it started

In 2012, an organization named Fight for 15 was created to support fast food workers in New York City that walked off the job to demand \$15 per hour and union rights. This organization became the launching pad for a national effort to influence local municipalities to pass employment ordinances that include wage increases, mandates for employee

scheduling, and regulations governing sick and safe time being provided to employees.

According to the 2016 U.S. Chamber of Commerce State Labor Law Reform Tools for Growth Report, Fight for \$15 has now successfully passed and implemented wage ordinances in 35 cities with over 20 counties and cities having passed a form of paid sick and safe leave to their employees. The main geographic focus of these efforts has been on the east and west coasts where there were strong union and progressive connections.

Fight for \$15 was an effort created and led by Service Employee International Union (SEIU). It served as a rally cry for other unions and progressive groups who advocate for social equality to mobilize and coordinate their efforts. National groups include ASFCME, AFL CIO, Alliance for Youth Action have since joined together to support the movement.

According to the Center for Union Facts (CUF), through financial disclosures to the Department of Labor, SEIU has reported to have spent \$90 million on the Fight for \$15 since it launched in 2012.

The movement to organize and mobilize efforts on wage and workforce regulations were strategically targeted to begin in New York and California because the politics and progressive movements were already closely aligned and these areas provided the best probability of success. This initial success encouraged advocates to look to other cities to expand their focus.

Minnesota, being a very active political state with a strong sense of pride in its on-going citizen engagement and general public policy advocacy efforts, become a likely target. Traditionally, Minnesota has one of the highest voter turnout percentages in the country and has a unique blend of very strong progressive and conservative ideologies. At the same time, there has been a shift in the population balance in the state to the larger cities where local city elected officials are more likely to be open to progressive ideas.

These perspectives are reflective in the geographic political divide among Minnesotans. The urban core, such as Saint Paul and Minneapolis, are consistently

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represented by strong progressive/democrat elected officials, while Greater Minnesota and Suburban areas represent traditionally more conservative/republican views or a mix of both Democrats and Republicans. Duluth has also experienced an important change that has moved its city council and local election politics to the left because of an increase in newer, younger residents shifting the landscape.

Minnesota's political divide has become more significant and expansive in recent years as legislative districts in Greater Minnesota are more likely to be represented by Republicans while at the same time the legislative delegations from Minneapolis and Saint Paul continue to be exclusively represented by Democrats. President Trump won significantly in rural and exurban parts of the state in the past Presidential election and came closer to winning the state outright than any other Republican in recent elections. While the mayoral elections last year in Minneapolis and Saint Paul both did not have a viable Republican candidate.

Unions and progressive groups in Minnesota understand the existing political divide and the challenge it creates to pass any of their workforce initiatives at the state level. Instead, they are now focused on influencing local municipal elections and policy decisions in Minneapolis, Saint Paul, targeted suburban cities Duluth, and other regional centers. This includes targeting those councils to pass initiatives such as \$15 minimum wage, mandates for employee scheduling, and paid sick time and safe leave. These initiatives exceed current state-wide rules and regulations.

Minneapolis and Saint Paul both have a long history of active union organizations which in the past were led by trade and skilled labor groups who advocated for key projects that created jobs for their members. This has changed as progressive groups are now the more active and dominate voice in advocacy efforts. These groups are driving a more aggressive agenda that often differs from the trade and skilled labor unions agendas. They instead represent service workers, immigrants, and other related stakeholders who have a growing level of influence with elected officials.

Similar to the national efforts, Minnesota has active local chapters of these groups that includes SEIU local 26, ISALAH, Take Action, MN Jewish Action Community, and locals of the AFL/CIO and ASFME that have organized to pass this progressive agenda in the urban core of Minnesota and have begun to expand to other communities.

In 2015, SEIU and other local progressive organizations led the charge in Minneapolis to pass \$15 minimum wage, aggressive scheduling mandates, and new paid sick and safe regulations. Minneapolis had a supportive city council and mayor for these initiatives because of the support both received from these special interest groups during recent elections.

Selecting Minneapolis as the first step towards various progressive policies created a path to reach out to additional cities that may be supportive such as; Saint Paul, Duluth, and Rochester. Once advocates have identified an issue and targeted a city to pursue to pass a change, it is then a common practice for the city council or other supporters to create a study group or quasi-public/private committees to review the issue and make a recommendation to the full council and mayor.

Minneapolis and Saint Paul have passed various forms of paid sick and safe leave. Saint Paul is expected to pass its own version of \$15 minimum wage after Minneapolis passed an ordinance in 2017. The progressive group strategy is to continue to pick off a few urban core areas to support progressive policies, encourage more cities to adapt, and ultimately force the legislature to conform and pass state-wide laws in response to what has happened at the local level.

Currently, progressive groups are expanding their influence and reach to communities such as Bloomington, St. Louis Park, Duluth, Mankato, and Rochester. Policy items being proposed include:

- \$15 Minimum Wage,
- Paid Sick and Safe Leave,
- Affordable Housing Regulations,
- Bans on Plastic Bags and Recycling Rules,
- Franchise Fees and Telecommunication/Fiber Regulations,
- Tobacco 21, and
- Carbon Neutral Goals.

When issues like this are traditionally advanced at the state legislative level, the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce and other statewide business organizations and associations proactively engage to respond, modify, or oppose these measures. These groups are actively involved in lobbying, have staff and budget resources to support this work, and are viewed by supporters and opponents as effective advocates.

With the focus of progressive groups being shifted to local communities, the local chamber of commerce

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community now needs to fill this same role that the Minnesota Chamber and other groups have done in what is often a different set of tactics and strategies that local chambers traditionally are involved in. Local chambers are now in a place where their leadership and active participation in a mix of proactive and reactive advocacy work is essential to counter the impact these changes will have on local, regional, and the statewide economy.

While chambers and business groups are viewed as credible advocates at the state level, chambers at a city level are often viewed less as advocates and more as friends of elected officials. This “friendly” relationship is often exploited by the active progressive groups who often do not view chambers at the local level the same way as a business group at the state level.

As the battle lines over work force issues will continue to be at the city council and county board, chambers of commerce, their boards and leadership will need to not only monitor issues and the ongoing efforts to create city-by-city code and rule changes, they will also need to bring together the resources and a commitment to actively engage.

This may mean creating proactive ways to support changes in advance of other groups bringing issues to a community as well as being able to create, organize and activate broad coalitions to defend their marketplace and its future economic viability.

Prepared is a briefing of the policy issues that are being proposed at cities throughout Minnesota and a guideline on how to organize and mobilize to defend the business community. ●



Affordable Housing/Rent Control

Rent control, or rent stabilization, regulates the amount and frequency of rent increases landlords can charge tenants. They are meant to control the availability of housing that is affordable to people who are not of means. Its origins date to post WWI housing shortages in Europe; here in the US, domestic rent control initiatives have their roots in 1978's Proposition 13, an amendment to the California state constitution. Proposition 13 was enacted to cap property tax increases that long time and older Californians thought would price them out of their homes. It was favored by the state's landlords who claimed that, if passed, rental housing prices would drop—and the supply of affordable housing would increase.

Rent stabilization initiatives typically apply only to older housing units built before a specified date. Rental properties built after this date are exempt, as are rent-controlled properties that have been recently vacated. Renters who sign leases to occupy these properties at a set rental price are not subject to increases outside of those adjusted for inflation. Critics point out that these people are less likely to move, therefore they help fuel increased rents in the uncontrolled sector due to simple economics, i.e., supply and demand.

Rent control came to the fore in Minnesota in 2000 when Minnesota Housing created the Minnesota Families Affordable Rental Investment Fund (MARIF). The program received an initial outlay of \$54 million to provide housing units that are affordable to people who are earning at or near the poverty level. Those who would benefit most from affordable housing legislation head households that face an increased risk of housing cost burden, meaning they are often faced with spending 30% or more of their income on housing costs alone. MARIF was created to help alleviate this, particularly among groups which include: single parent households with multiple minor children; less educated and thus often low-income wage earners; recipients of public assistance or pensions as sole sources of income; very often persons of color; households of four or more members.

Those opposed to rent stabilization policies note that, if enacted the supply and quality of affordable housing

would decrease, as unscrupulous landlords opt not to improve and properly maintain rent controlled properties. They also note that landlords often convert rental units to condominiums to skirt rent control laws. Opponents also point out that neighborhood gentrification, a wholly unintended consequence, often results, as landlords demolish and replace rent-controlled properties with those which are now exempt. Therefore, the people who these policies are intended to help are never able to take advantage of them.

Today, the issue falls along political party lines, with changes to the status quo looming in Minneapolis and St. Paul in this election year. It is a program that is often brought up by the right as costly and unnecessary when budget cuts are discussed; it is favored by progressives and those on the left as a necessity that benefits society, as it makes more housing available to persons of limited means.

As of May 1, Minneapolis will become the first government in the state to make it illegal to discriminate based on public assistance, or federally subsidized (Section 8) Housing Choice Vouchers. These allow recipients the option of living in privately owned—as well as—public housing. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has oversight authority over these vouchers, and has come under fire from landlords for the bureaucratic and delay-filled way in which the program is administered. Landlords complain that, as a result, many of their units go unrented for extended periods.

Census data shows that housing costs in the Twin Cities are the highest among 20 of the nation's largest metro areas and 26% higher than those of neighboring states. Research indicates that this is due in part to the (increasing) amount of regulations, building codes and energy-use stipulations which are more strenuous than other nearby cities; and the high cost of metro-area land due to centralized planning and large lot sizes. These positions help to fuel the current affordable housing crisis that is poised to play itself out in the current election year—and beyond. ●



Minimum Wage/Safe Sick Time/ Scheduling Or Employee Friendly Regulations

SAFE/SICK: This issue is rooted in the belief that hourly workers should be allowed to earn sick and safe time to use for their own health needs, and those of their family members—as do salaried workers. Advocates point out that doing so would benefit society as it would lead to lower public and private health care costs as more preventative care is utilized. Instead of reporting for work when sick out of the fear of losing their jobs, hourly workers should instead be able to see their health care provider and/or stay home to get better. Also, hourly employees should be given more, and not less, choices and greater flexibility to improve their own work/life balance. And, to assist victims of domestic abuse, hourly workers should also be able to utilize paid leave to obtain treatment without fear of their job status being affected.

Minneapolis' safe/sick ordinance was passed in 2016 and held up in court cases filed last summer and fall. As of January 1, it applies in St. Paul as well. Today, all Minneapolis and St. Paul-based employers whose workers exceed 80 hours in a city in a 12-month period, and that have more than 12 employees (although Minneapolis-based firms with less than five employees are exempt). Both cities would also like to have these regulations applied to all employers whose employees merely work within each city's boundaries 80 or more hours per year. However, this provision faces stiff opposition as it will require additional and costly record keeping by these firms. Duluth is also considering similar legislation.

Opposition to mandated safe/sick time requirements say it takes the choice option out of workers' hands, and could instead leads to employers reducing other benefits and wages (and not unlike when employers were required to offer maternity leave in the early 1990's.) Additionally, the reporting requirements placed on companies whose head offices are located out of state, yet their employees work in Minneapolis or St. Paul, face a patchwork of regulations that will be a burden to comply with for each state they do business in.

MINIMUM WAGE: As of January 1, Minnesota has two new minimum wage designations: \$9.65/hr. and \$7.87/hr. based on a firm's gross revenues. A national movement to have wages increase even more statewide does not have broad support. However, a \$10/hr. minimum wage that recently took effect in Minneapolis could become an issue in the run-up to this year's elections. Similar ordinances have recently passed in San Francisco, Seattle and DC; one is on the docket for 2018 in St. Paul, with a potential sticking point being if tip-earning employees—like wait and hospitality staff—should be exempt or not. Opponents of this legislation include the retail industry who warns that set minimum wages could stifle job creation. Others feel they can only be set at the state level, and that annual earnings could actually fall for hourly workers as they see their hours cut as a result.

SCHEDULING: Advance or predictive scheduling initiatives are also gaining steam across the country, with state and local politicians introducing legislation about it in Minnesota and some 15 other states in the past year. Proponents say they will empower hourly employees and improve their work/life balance by requiring restaurateurs and retailers to publish work schedules at least two weeks in advance. Workers who hold down multiple part-time jobs are in favor of having this information.

Restaurants and other seasonal businesses are opposed, as those who do not adhere to these published schedules could be required to provide payment to employees, or be fined, if they change. These employers also note that staffing demands often change situationally and on short notice due to seasonal demands, weather issues, turnover and holidays and other unforeseen circumstances which are out of their control. Small, independently owned businesses with few staff can be unduly—and monetarily—harmed by these requirements as the give and take of employer/employee relationships could suffer thus impacting customer service. ●



T21 Tobacco Sales

As the well documented and harmful effects of tobacco usage among adults becomes commonplace, municipal and state-wide restrictions on tobacco sales to youth and adolescents are gaining momentum across the country. Advocates of this legislation point out that smoking leads to more deaths than from alcohol, illegal drugs, auto accidents, suicides, homicides, AIDS and fires combined.

Information like this led to a steady decline in the use of tobacco products among our nation's youth for many years. Throughout this decline, funding to keep teen smoking rates low also declined. And new legislation to reinvigorate this downward trend—such as tax increases which raise the prices of all tobacco products—face uphill battles.

With this trend's reversal in 2014, new approaches in selling tobacco products to teens and adolescents were used including colorful and creative packaging that's made to look like candy, menthol and other flavors that are more appealing, and smaller, more affordable packages. Today, small cigars, hookahs, e-cigarettes, and flavored vaping products are often among the first nicotine delivery items that young people experiment with because of these targeted marketing practices.

In March 2015, the Institute of Medicine estimated that a nationwide ban on the sale of tobacco products to those who are not 21 years of age—or T21 legislation—would prevent 4.2 million years of life lost to smoking in adolescents and young people. A July, 2015 CDC study concluded that 75% of adults—the majority of whom were smokers—favored raising the legal age to 21 to purchase tobacco products. Municipal-wide legislation in Massachusetts in 2013 led to precipitous drops in teen smoking; it was determined that as this was due to high schoolers having few peers over 21 who could buy cigarettes for them.

State wide legislation is gaining steam across the country, with T21 having already passed in Hawaii, Oregon, Maine, New Jersey and California. More than 290 municipalities across 19 other states have also passed local T21 ordinances. Minnesota's first

foray into T21 legislation occurred in 2017 when Edina restricted the sale of tobacco products to persons 21 and older. St. Louis Park did the same last July, and Bloomington and Plymouth did so in November. Duluth, Detroit Lakes, Mankato and North Mankato are all considering similar local ordinances in the near future.

Opposition to T21 legislation include municipalities which enact it, as it results in decreases in revenue, particularly in convenience stores where youth go to buy “smokes” and then often also get snacks and drinks when they do. Underage smokers get around the law by traveling to neighboring towns to make these purchases leading convenience store proprietors to say that the only real solution to this patchwork approach is with state-wide T21 legislation, similar to what was introduced in the Minnesota Senate last May with support from both the GOP and DFL. Not surprisingly, the state's health care providers, including Allina and Health Partners, also back T21 legislation...

Those opposed to T21 laws note that they only prohibit the sale of tobacco products in the municipalities where they have been enacted; they do not penalize 18 to 20 year-olds for possessing tobacco products. And, not surprisingly the tobacco industry is not in favor of T21 laws at any level, as there are estimates that it could cost them sales of up to 25 billion cigarettes and cut into their 70 percent market share with 17 to 20 year olds. ●



Banning Plastic Bags/ Styrofoam Recycling

PLASTIC BAGS The movement by environmentalists and sustainability experts to have local governments ban the use of plastic carryout bags for grocery and convenience store patrons has been growing over the past two decades. These restrictions are being pushed at the local level, as they have little chance of being passed as state-wide ballot initiatives across the country. Minnesota is a good case-in-point, as Gov. Dayton is believed to support local initiatives.

Many Americans believe that regulating plastic bag usage can mitigate harmful impacts to waterways and forests and the wildlife that inhabit them. And, as recycling programs grow in scope and number across the county, support to relieve pressure on landfills and waste management is also evident. Proponents of these programs note that plastic bags of all types that end up at recycling facilities can lead to costly shut-downs of equipment and machinery to alleviate jams. In addition, research shows that once plastic bags are part of the waste stream, they only break down into smaller pieces and always remain part of it until they are incinerated.

More than 160 cities across the country have enacted carryout bag bans and/or fees, including Minneapolis. However its full implementation was halted one day before it was set to go into effect due to the passage of a state law banning such ordinances prompting city officials to say that this will only force them to rethink their approach. Cities including Duluth and St. Paul may also reconsider their pending bans as well.

Local governments are caught in the crossfire in this debate: city councils are increasingly encouraged to adopt ordinances that would ban merchants from providing customers all types of bags: paper, plastic, or reusable ones for environmental reasons, or enact fees to help mitigate their usage in the hopes that shoppers bring their own bags when doing their grocery and convenience store shopping.

Many locales have promoted these fees to help clean up the environment; however, enacting them often

result in complex give back programs between cities and retailers, such as Chicago's which became law in 2015. In it, merchants get three cents of every 10 with the city getting seven. Retailers often oppose these fees knowing they will be passed along to consumers in increased costs. Others cite the fear of losing business to towns and cities that do not institute these fees.

There are even efforts to repeal plastic bag bans which were enacted some time ago on the grounds that, not only do they represent only .05% of the overall waste stream, but their usage has not declined. Instead, these bans have encouraged people to find work arounds such as bringing their own bags when shopping or to support retailers' take-back programs that offer recycling kiosks.

POLYSTYRENE More recently, many communities are also being pressured to ban the use of polystyrene (Styrofoam) take-out food containers and plastic lined cardboard drink cups. The reasoning here is that recycling these items cannot be done so "single stream", and instead require additional and costly steps which refuse/recycling companies ultimately pass along to consumers as rate increases. In fact, many recycling companies, such as Eureka in Ramsey County do not accept Styrofoam.

Opposing such ordinances are the Styrofoam industry, as well as many restaurant owners who provide these containers for take-out service. Both point out that Styrofoam is in fact recyclable; however doing so requires separate drop off sites, many of which exist across the Twin Cities metro area. ●



Climate Change – Carbon Neutral Cities

Today, cities, states and government entities of all sizes are encouraged to join the Climate Change bandwagon. Doing so requires a commitment to the concept of Carbon Neutrality which requires adherents remove as much carbon dioxide from the earth's atmosphere as they put in, particularly by burning fossil fuels. These entities have Carbon Footprints which result from emissions from three, key Greenhouse Gasses (GHG): Carbon Dioxide (CO₂), Methane and Nitrous Oxide. More simply, Carbon Footprints are expressed as CO₂ equivalents.

It is estimated that urban areas now account for roughly 75% of all of the earth's GHG emissions. These GHG's are byproducts of: internal combustion engines which have almost exclusively powered our modes of transportation for the better part of the twentieth century. They also come from coal, wood and fuel oil which have exponentially powered and heated our homes and workplaces since Europe and North America transformed themselves from rural, agrarian societies to urban and industrial ones more than two centuries ago.

Today's atmospheric CO₂ level is roughly 385 parts per million (ppm), which is thought to be about 30 ppm above the level of environmental sustainability. Carbon Neutrality proponents note that, if allowed to continue unabated, this level would reach 450 ppm by 2050 leading to runaway Climate Change, and an unprecedented warming of the planet. These supporters point to an increasing array of signs warning of imminent global warming. In Minnesota, these indicators include: more frequent heavy rain events which result in erosion and flooding of low-lying roadways, homes and businesses; less all-snow and more freezing rain and ice events which are a challenge to traffic patterns, snow plowing and safety; and changes to the longevity and overall health of the state's rural and urban forests due to the last half-century's warmer and shorter winters.

Critics agree that atmospheric GHG's are increasing can be proved in a lab simulation. Yet they also contend that mankind is not harmed from additional GHG's, citing a lack of actual proof as well as a poor understanding of the innumerable complexities of our planet's climate. They go on to say that further support lies in a lack of evidence of more frequent tornadoes and hurricanes in 60 and 120 years respectively, and that neither droughts nor heat waves are less severe than they have been over the last 1,000 years. They also contend that the costs of becoming Carbon Neutral are prohibitive, i.e., that renewable energy is not necessarily affordable energy. They go on to say that the quality of life for future generations will be better for those who utilize carbon-based energy sources, as does 85% of the world.

When a government entity or organization (such as a school or university) agrees to commit to Carbon Neutrality, many of the following activities result: paper, glass, plastics - and perhaps even organic materials – are recycled; internal combustion engine emissions are reduced or eliminated entirely; renewable energy sources such as wind, solar and biomass are adopted; and wood, coal and trash can no longer be burned without costly air-pollution mitigation systems such as smokestack scrubbers. Although the up-front costs of doing so are often high, the return-on-investment from favorable PR and media coverage are hoped to eventually mitigate these monetary outlays.

The Carbon Neutrality movement has as its champion The Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance (CNCA). The CNCA began in 2014 with 17 cities: Boulder, Boston, Minneapolis, NYC, Portland (OR), San Francisco, Seattle, Washington DC, Berlin, Copenhagen, London, Melbourne, Oslo, Stockholm and Sydney, Vancouver and Yokohama. The CNCA aims to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2050 under the slogan "80 x 50". Both Minneapolis and the State of Minnesota have adopted 80 x 50, while St. Paul aims to be 100% carbon neutral, or 100 x 50, by then.

Climate Change – Carbon Neutral Cities

In 2017, St. Paul joined 633 other cities across the globe in agreeing to develop plans to address climate change via transformative changes in energy systems, transportation networks, commerce centers, neighborhoods and even governance practices. The Capital City aims to cut GHG emissions by: decreasing the amount of road miles traveled by individual cars by encouraging residents to walk, bicycle and utilize public transportation more often; by increasing the use of electric and hybrid cars and buses; by participating in the city's recycling program; and by encouraging residents to plant more residential trees since urban forests mitigate heavy rainfalls and winter energy usage when it's windy.

Today, Minneapolis spends \$1.1 million annually on fossil fuels. It is estimated that, instead of doing so, 84,000 homes could be heated by the sun; giving all of the city's residents transit passes for three years; and providing energy efficient upgrades for all of their homes (as long as energy costs remain about the same).

Over the seven-year period between 2006 and 2013, GHG emissions in Minneapolis decreased 9.4%, while the population increased 6.5% and the regional GDP increased 22%. To further decrease GHG emissions, in early 2013, Minneapolis became the first Midwestern city to require commercial buildings over 50,000 square feet and public buildings over 25,000 square feet, to annually benchmark and report their energy and water consumption.

Like St. Paul, which has nearly 80 miles of on-street bike lanes, Minneapolis is committed to bike friendliness. According to Census data, The City of Lakes ranks second in terms of the percentage of commuters who bike to work. Perhaps this is due in part the city having the nation's first largescale bike-sharing system, which will be eight years old this year. There is also a goal to have a 30-mile network of protected bike lanes so that bicycling becomes safer, more accessible and main mode of commuting, recreation and exercise for more people. ●



Municipal Broadband/ Franchise Fees

Should municipalities have their own broadband systems? Or should they continue to lease the systems they currently have—many of which are outdated, slow and often in need of costly repair, and pay costly franchise fees to ISP's? Historically, franchise fees are annual in nature, and charged by local governments to telecom companies as compensation for using public property, such as telephone lines, poles, etc., as a right-of-way to deliver its services. In the case of broadband, these also include fiber-optic cable and servers, routers and other switching equipment needed to move data between suppliers and users consistently and efficiently. These fees (or so called taxes) are negotiated up front during the request-for-bids process, and run for a consecutive number (10 or 12) of years.

The arguments in favor of municipal franchise fees centers around the need to upgrade antiquated and unreliable first-generation digital systems which were built to piggyback on top of older analog hub-and-spoke telephone systems. Advocates for the newer systems, which utilize mesh configurations, note that they will be equipped to handle new and improving technologies, which support faster speeds and more capacity, or bandwidth. These state-of-the-art broadband systems will be better suited to meet a growing municipality's data processing needs for education, health care, job training and libraries and senior centers. Municipal broadband systems offer the best return-on-investment for a small government entity. Since they are owned by the government entity, there are no leasing fees to pay to third-party vendors. Further, incurred expenses can be written off over a longer period than a for-profit business would.

These systems also offer the option of leasing the new system to a local telecom to operate it for them. In many instances this can work as a better option for end-users, i.e. taxpayers, who are billed at cheaper rates—if not free-of-charge. Handled properly, this can also be a selling point to companies and industries looking to relocate a plant, distribution center or regional or local office.

Another option is for a local telecom build a new broadband system that a municipality has helped to fund. The telecom then leases the system back to the town. Historically, this has happened in those areas where powerful telecoms, or ISP's, have a foothold and a history of fighting ballot initiatives. Critics of this approach point out that this approach is not cost-effective. Nor does it allow the county or township say in much-needed upgrades or improvements that must be done in a timely fashion in order to remain attractive to relocating businesses and organizations. ●



What to Do/What Happens Next

1. Situation Analysis

Take action now and reach out to local elected officials and find out if they have been approached by any unions, local environmental groups, and progressive organizations such as Isiah and Take Action Minnesota. In addition to these groups, the League of Minnesota Cities shares information regarding new regulatory policies.

Once you've reached out to local elected officials, reach out to key influential chamber of commerce members and business leaders that may be impacted by any of these policies and gain a sense of their awareness if any of these regulatory issues have surfaced around their business.

After you've gathered information, assess the situation, and reach out to a fellow colleague in the chamber of commerce community. Use this opportunity to compare notes, share insights, and ask for advice on best practices and lessons learned if they have dealt with any of these advocacy debates in the past.

2. Brief Your Internal Audiences

Immediately after determining that you've identified a threat your business community, prepare to communicate your findings to various internal audiences that include:

- Executive Board
- Board of Directors
- Public Affairs Committee
- Potential Funders
- Members

3. Identify Goals and Budget

The best and most effective advocacy campaigns are often won early in the process by defining clear goals. Our Chamber of Commerce and its allies need to decide if they want to fight to completely eliminate the anti-business proposal or delaying the proposal for a

specific period of time. In determining the ultimate goal consider the overall political climate, the timing of the election cycle, and when specific local officials are up for reelection.

Once you've defined a clear goal, begin creating a list of potential donors to support and fund your advocacy efforts. Start the process of building a campaign budget and begin making calls to members to get the campaign running.

4. Create Strategy, Tactics, and Raise Money

Once you've arrived at a defined goal and budget, it's time to start constructing a game plan.

- Start by building a strong, and active coalition – the foundation of every successful advocacy campaign. Coalition members ought to include:
 - Local business leaders/owners,
 - Business related associations such as – Grocers Association, Hospitality Minnesota, Minnesota Retailers Association,
 - Local Business Associations
 - Neighboring Chambers of Commerce, etc.
- Create Steering Committee – Advocacy campaigns will move quickly requiring key decisions to be made will equal efficiency. A steering committee of 3 to 6 people will give the campaign the leadership necessary to react in real time.
 - Steering Committee should be the point person for the media, elected officials, and the broader coalition.
- Develop Key Messaging & Campaign Brand - which will be integral to all communication moving forward. Key messaging is the foundation of the effort, but additional messaging will be required as the campaign develops.

What to Do/What Happens Next

Key messaging should include:

- Three to five themes (couple of examples)
- Three to five proof points for each of your themes
- Develop a Brand and Logo that is reflective of your advocacy goals
 - Minneapolis Works & Minneapolis Proud, 1st Choice St. Paul, Rochester Coalition & Track the Truth, No Lake Elmo Expansion
- Initial Outreach and Campaign Launch – Once you have key messaging in place it is never too early to begin communicating with potential supporters. Start by:
 - Alerting your members and partner organization members
 - Press release or other form of public announcement of the coalition and its theme.
- Identify Resources for Success – Who and what is needed to make your effort successful. The most impactful coalitions expand beyond your members and partner organization's membership by engaging the general public. Engaging consultants with past experience in grassroots and coalition campaigns can be incredibly important to ensure you know what you don't know.
 - Data – Reviewing your membership data and obtaining a new list of active citizens that are likely to be supportive will help build a team of advocates.
 - Phones and Surveys – Contacting supporters in advance through a simple 5 question phone survey will help identify those that are willing to take action to influence City Hall
 - Consultants- Public Affair and Public Relation Consultants provide the insight and experience to help develop an advocacy program that will be impactful. They will have the best sense on the latest advocacy tools, political landscape, and current events.

5. Activate and Take Action

- Announcement – When goals, coalitions, brand, and messages have been completed it is time to launch the advocacy effort. Announcements can be done in various forms

- Press Conference
 - At the Chamber of Commerce
 - At a business location that will be impacted
 - At City Hall
- Media Release – Draft a release and send out to targeted media outlets
 - Local papers and radio stations are impactful in Greater Minnesota
- Social Media – Prepare to launch your new branded advocacy effort via social media
 - Target new followers prior to launch and set a goal of followers
 - Consider buying social media ads to generate awareness
 - Use social media to update supporters about campaign activities
 - Capture personal stories about local business support
- Earned Media - Be prepared to identify authors for op-eds, LTE's, encourage your current social media followers to make digital comments, and have key spokespeople be guests on local radio and television shows.
- Social Media - Advocating through social media is now the norm on reaching out to local elected officials and local media. Having a focused effort to make it easy for your members and supporters to share their opinions is essential to a successful campaign. Consider launching a new brand for social media instead of your chamber brand to create some separation to your core chamber mission. Make the investment to purchase social media advertising. It is a very efficient method to raise the profile of the issue to a targeted issue.
- Phone Program - Calls into City Hall that reach the Mayor and Council Members make a difference. Staff will keep track of the amount of calls constituents make on a specific issue. A phone program can be twofold: 1) encourage key members of your coalition to call in and have them report back that they called and provide feedback from the conversation 2) Organize a patch-through program that launches a system that calls and connects your pre-determined supporters and members, briefs them on the issue and sends them directly to City Hall to share their opinion. The campaign receives a report of the amount of patch calls that connected with City Hall and specific elected officials.

What to Do/What Happens Next

- Direct Mail Programs - Reaching out to targeted constituents is still an effective message to create awareness of public affairs campaigns. In addition to sending mail as an awareness effort, consider adding a tear-off component for supporters to write comments about the topic and have them mail it back to your office to keep track of comments. This will be another impactful deliverable that shows support for your position.
- Letter Writing Campaign - A traditional and effective method to making an impact with local officials is through a letter writing campaign. Sending letters either through the mail or e-mail supporting your position makes an impact on your local officials and will often times get a response. Preferably, get letters on company letterhead or personal stationary, have the author scan the letter and e-mail the pdf to the elected official. Make sure to get a copy of all letters to have on file and be ready to highlight that the campaign knows how many letters have been sent.
- Meetings with Elected Officials - Chamber members and supportive citizens having scheduled meetings with elected officials is critical to sharing the chamber's position on a topic. Prepare your supporters with key messaging and talking points
 - While meeting with elected officials, share how many members are in the chamber, who's a participant of your coalition, and the leaders of your coalition.
- Media Relations - The moment the campaign is launched, immediately develop relationships with media outlets and the reporters that will cover this topic. Prepare a media schedule that will distribute various angles of telling your story to the local media. Your story pitch will most likely not run every-time when you share it with the media, but is critical to keep of steady drum beat of your messaging to condition the media when they have to cover the topic.
- Public Comment Periods - It is common for some local forms of government to create a 30-60 public comment period for all sides to weigh and provide officials' comments for the record. Coordinate a public comment strategy with your coalition to submit for the record. Create system that makes it easy to deliver comments to City Hall. Consider drafting messages for supporters to build a knowledge base of the issue and have them add a personal touch. Organize a letter writing party and collect letters to deliver on their behalf. Finally, create a digital/on-line system that is connect from your digital platforms to

the local municipality that is collecting comments.

- Measure and Track Activities – Build a campaign schedule of key milestones and support those milestones with goals around the various deliverable advocacy items that the campaign has agreed to implement. Have weekly updates on how many calls have been made into City Hall, letters written, meetings with elected officials, latest feedback regarding all elected official's position, and most importantly measure fundraising and campaign spend.

6. Assess the Results:

Have scheduled calls or meetings with steering committee and consultants to measure the impact of the campaign and be flexible to make adjustments to reach your goals. Campaigns are a bumpy adventure and experience highs and lows. Stay focused and committed on your business advocacy goals. ●