NRHA AND PUBLIC POLICY: A LITTLE FISH MAKES A BIG SPLASH

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Questions For Rural Advocates to Ponder

On the Way to Being the Voice For Rural America ...

- Who are these guys (policy makers)?

- Why are they doing this to me?

- What can I do about it?

- Am I making a difference?
WHO ARE THESE GUYS (POLICY MAKERS)?

NRHA’s broad mission:

Requires broad-based support

• communities
• states
• nation

Natural to focus on the “big gorilla” that drives much of the resource base – Medicare
The Challenge of Policy Identification

- What’s a wonk to do?
- Villains here
- Allies there
- Complexity everywhere
- Sorting out the forest and the trees
WHY ARE THEY DOING THIS TO ME?

Conflicting policy objectives

- Providing access to services, with focus on financial access
- Measuring the quality of the services delivered
- Controlling expenditures

The big fish eats first
Result

- Little fish left adrift
- Benign neglect
WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT IT?

NRHA REACTS

- Lawsuit challenges PPS inpatient payment different standardized payments for rural and urban

- But why did the payment policy develop the way it did?

- Big fish protecting their base

- Technocrats supporting the differential policy based on their regression analyses
WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT IT?
(continued)

LESSONS

• Reaction is always after the fact – the damage is done

• A “shock” strategy has some merits

• But a long term strategy requires a better base of information of analysis

• And an active presence in discussions that can take years
SO NOW WHAT?

NRHA begins **BUILDING THE BASE**

- Advocates successfully for an Office of Rural Health Policy in HHS
- Advocates successfully for funding for the new ORHP to support research and dissemination
- Advocates successfully for a National Advisory Committee on Rural Health

Revised bylaws creates a separate Policy Board

Creates a Government Affairs Committee
ON TO ACTION

Developing policy resolutions

Evolve into policy papers

Make greater use of evidence
  • from researchers/analysts
  • from the field

Show a presence
EXPANDING THE BASE

- Grassroots campaigns
- Seeking allies in other camps
- Building the Government Affairs Office
AM I (NRHA) MAKING A DIFFERENCE?

- BBA and beyond

- Invited to testify, meet

- Well known in policy circles

- Broaden activities to more policy arenas: regulatory policy now, perhaps state an private later?

**LESSON:** Perseverance supported by dedicated staff and members pays
LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

• Skirmishes will continue

• But achieving a vision will be more satisfying