

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



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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

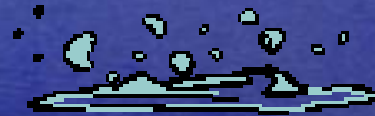
Show a presence

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

RUPRI Center for Rural Health Policy Analysis

www.rupri.org/healthpolicy

