

# Local Advocacy

Presented by WISCAP's Executive Director

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## About me:

Current Executive Director of WISCAP

Former Director of Government  
Relations of PPWI

Almost 6 years of experience in  
Lobbying and Advocacy

# Training objective



Examine the structure of local government



Identify key roles Local Government has in shaping legislation



Ways to effectively navigate and engage in local policy-making.



Apply strategies for engaging with community leaders and policymakers to advocate for legislative changes that reflect Community Action agencies values and address community needs.

# Pros and Cons of Local Government Advocacy

## Disadvantages

- Limited Powers
- Limited Resources
- Small “p” politics (personal)

## Advantages

- Less Bureaucracy
- Access
- Easier to build coalitions with neighbors
- Long and short term solutions and resources

# Types of Local Government Structures

City

County

Municipalities

Townships

School boards

# First Step in Local Government Advocacy: Understanding Governmental Structures

1

Take the time to understand the structure of your local government

2

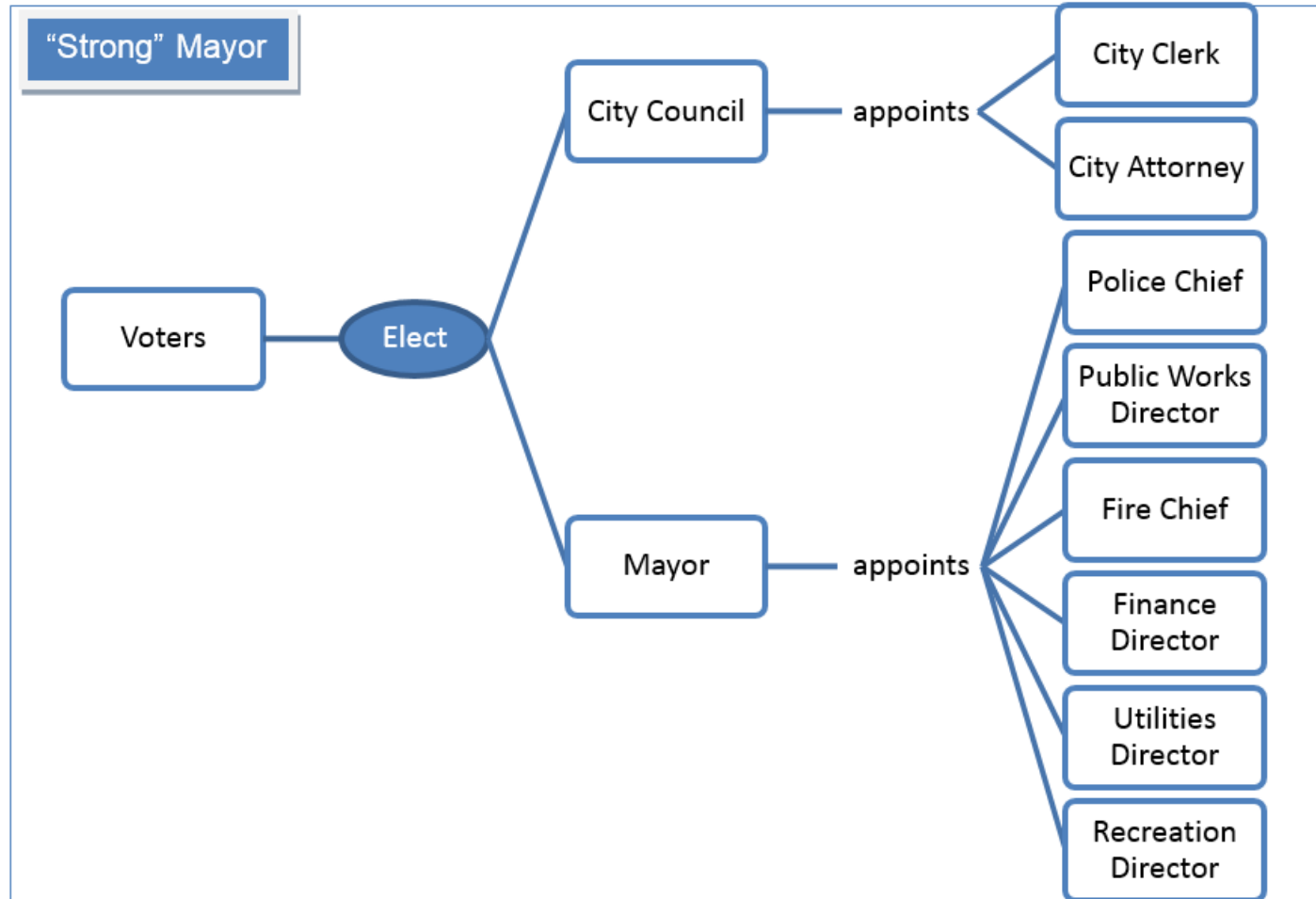
Familiarize yourself with the types of entities

3

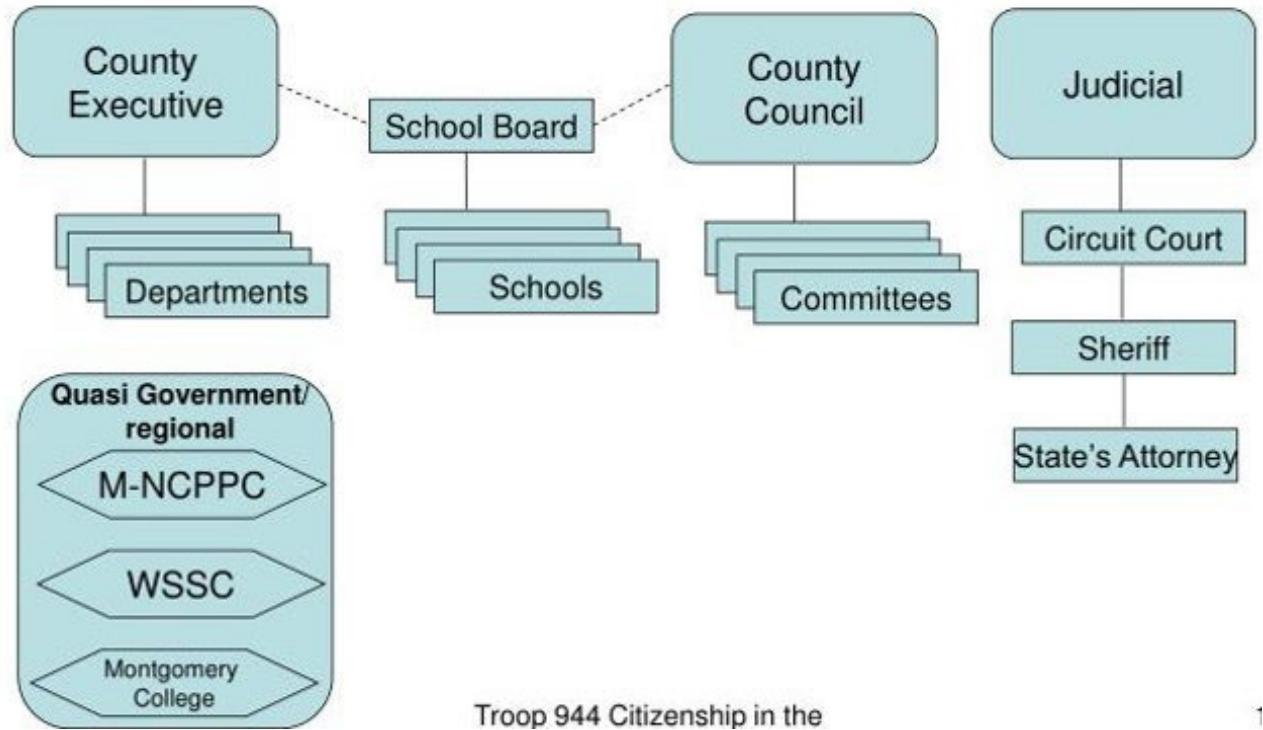
Know who the decision-makers

- Elected?
- Appointed?
- Scope of their authority

# City Government Structure



# County Government Structure





## Step 2: Identify Key Issues



# Key Issues

What issues matter the most to you and the people you serve

Education

Housing

Economic  
Development

Environmental  
issues



Gather this info through:

Needs assessments

Surveys

Community  
meetings

# Identify your champions

## Start

Start with your own local reps (i.e. city councilmen)

## Research

Research local elected officials

- Visit their websites
- Follow them on social media
- Committee assignments

## Find out

Find out what issues are important to them

# Key to Advocacy? Relationships





# Build relationships with Local elected officials

## Attend

- Townhall meetings

- Community events

  - Festivals

  - Political Fundraisers

  - Grocery stores

- City Council and county board meetings

  - Most are open to the public

  - Notices are posted on entities websites

  - Many are virtual

# Building Relations tactics

Introduce

Introduce yourself

- In person or via email

Express

Express your concerns

Convey

Convey your proposed solutions

# Things to know about Local Elected officials

They are your friends and neighbors



Some have political ambitions beyond their current positions



Minimized egos



The work for you



Want to be the hero of an issue

# Key Local Relationships

## Mayors and County Executives

- Prioritize their staff
- Invite them to your events and centers
- They like tours and any media attention

## City Council Presidents and County Board chairs

- Often has the most influence on the council
- Invite them to events

## Committee Chairs

- Finance (typically the most powerful)
- Health and Human Services (has the biggest budgets)
- Other committees relevant to your work



# Craft your message

- Clear and compelling message
- What is the problem
- Who is impacted by the problem
  - Use data
  - And personal stories
- Tailor your messages to the values and priorities of your local government officials
- What is your proposed solution
- What is your ask

# Engage the community

- Create awareness about problem and proposed solutions
  - Social media
  - Local newspapers or other news outlets
  - Community gatherings (Farmers markets and festivals)
  - Encourage neighbors to get involved
  - A united community voice is a powerful force that can influence local decision-makers

# Get Involved



## Advisory boards

County-wide  
Agency-specific  
Elected officials'



## Local advocacy organizations with C<sub>4</sub> arms

Tend to have good relationships with elected officials  
Always looking for volunteers



## Professional Associations

Drive professional standards, promote best practices  
Elected officials see them as experts



## Attend public meetings

Present your data  
Share your perspective  
Advocate for your cause



## Utilize online platforms

When an elected does something right,  
highlight them  
Can help you connect with a broader audience  
Elected will likely follow you

Get Involved



Run for office



Volunteer for candidates who aligns with your values



Donate to their campaigns

Get Involved  
Politically

# Summary

- Local Advocacy benefits
  - Can help solve short and long term problems
  - Easier access to elected officials
  - Remember – they are regular every day people who work for you!

Q & A ?

