Report of the
National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys
Grassroots Task Force

Grassroots Advocacy Methods and Recommendations

Submitted to the NAELA Board of Directors

October 2006
National Academy of Elder Law Architects
Grassroots Task Force

Grassroots Advocacy Methods and Recommendations

Contributing Authors
Charles P. Sabatino, Chair
Doris E. Hawks, Vice Chair
Robert F. Brogan, CELA
Brian W. Lindberg
Michael F. Loring
Eric K. Macdonald
Michael J. McGuire
Lauchlin T. Waldoch, CELA
CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................................................................. 1

II. NETWORK DEVELOPMENT ........................................................................................................................... 1
    A. Structural Needs .............................................................................................................................................. 1
        1. Data Base and Software ............................................................................................................................ 1
        2. Legislative Communications Software .................................................................................................. 3
    B. Staffing .......................................................................................................................................................... 3
    C. Developing Target Audiences ..................................................................................................................... 5
        1. Our Membership ....................................................................................................................................... 5
        2. Our Chapters ............................................................................................................................................ 8
        3. Our Member’s Clients and Families and Local Groups ..................................................................... 9

III. NETWORK ACTION ........................................................................................................................................ 10
    A. Getting Information Out Regularly ............................................................................................................. 10
    B. Generating Immediate Action Response ................................................................................................ 11

IV. NETWORK RETENTION AND RECOGNITION .............................................................................................. 13

V. NEXT STEPS .................................................................................................................................................... 14

APPENDIX 1: Grassroots Task Force Survey Results .......................................................................................... 15
APPENDIX 2: Report on Capwiz Capabilities and Possible Upgrades .............................................................. 32
Report of the NAELA Grassroots Task Force

Grassroots Advocacy Methods and Recommendations

Submitted to the NAELA Board of Directors

October 2006

I. INTRODUCTION

The Grassroots Task Force is chaired by Charlie Sabatino, with Doris Hawks serving as vice-chair. The Task Force was created by Lawrence Davidow and continued by Donna Bashaw, NAELA’s immediate past president and current president respectively. In light of the advocacy efforts around the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005, it was determined that NAELA should reevaluate its grassroots advocacy program. The Task Force reviewed NAELA’s DRA grassroots efforts, interviewed nine organizations to assess their grassroots programs, reviewed literature on grassroots techniques, and developed this report. The report addresses the key issues of grassroots advocacy and outlines the next steps that NAELA will need to take to move its grassroots advocacy program forward.

II. NETWORK DEVELOPMENT

As a preliminary recommendation to all aspects of grassroots development, NAELA should take advantage of Ongoing Peer Group Support efforts through the Grassroots Roundtable which is sponsored by the Democracy Data Corp and has meetings at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. These sessions are open to anyone and are very informative. Link: http://www.grassrootsroundtable.org/default.asp

A. Structural Needs

Structural needs encompass the database and software capabilities needed plus the staffing needed to conduct grassroots advocacy.

1. Data Base and Software.

Two data base/software systems need to be in place and capable of working in sync with each other: (a) a member database with key functions geared to grassroots advocacy, and (b) a legislative tracking & communications software.

(a) The Member Database and Software program should be able to manage the following functions:
(1) Identify all NAELA members by federal legislative district (or districts if multiple offices in more than one district) and target group mailings to our members in selected districts.

(2) Identify and target mailings to the subset of members who join our grass roots action network.

(3) Identify “grass tops” members who have personal connections to elected officials, their senior staff, key executive branch officials, or other common interest groups (e.g. Alzheimer’s Association Chapters) and be able to catalog their personal connections in a retrievable way.

(4) Target communications to particular “grass tops” members.

(5) Communicate and synchronize with the NAELA member database so that changes in membership information automatically or periodically result in updates to the grass roots databases.

(6) Track history of members who communicate or otherwise contact federal officials in response to our requests.

(7) Track history of members who do NOT communicate or otherwise contact federal officials in response to our requests.

(8) Survey the members in these databases to obtain feedback on public policy efforts and priorities. Survey capability must include ability to collate and summarize responses received. This capability is part of tracking and measuring the effectiveness of the overall program from both the NAELA and member’s perspective. Evaluation has several levels: numeric tracking by communications sent and received, as well as surveys of how well the program is helping in practices would be a minimum.

(b) The legislative tracking and communications software should be able to manage the following functions:

(1) Enable members to identify their own elected officials and communicate with them by email, with tracking by NAELA.

(2) Provide our members with the latest legislative updates, legislative alerts, roll-call votes, legislative summaries, and the Congressional schedule.

(3) Provide members with templates for contacting members on our key issues.
(4) An additional element that is preferred but goes beyond the basics is online access to information about Congressional staff and a means to communicate with them.

(5) Enable members to transmit advocacy information to the clients and others in their data base easily; members should be able to use our advocacy information in their practice (newsletters, etc.) and should be able to transfer information to their clients, families, and key local groups easily and effectively.

(6) Get feedback back to the membership on their advocacy efforts, as quickly as possible.

2. Legislative Communications Software

There are numerous e-advocacy programs to choose from. Capwiz has been useful for NAELA’s needs but it might be helpful to assess the pros and cons of other systems. Depending on how NAELA’s grassroots advocacy efforts are expanded, we may need more sophisticated database software, for example. The following list contains some of the programs used by our interviewees and their notes:

- **Capwiz** (NAELA’s current web system): The ARC and AARP use this, but the ABA representative felt that it was quite expensive for emailing to the Hill.
- **Getwise**: None of the interviewees used it, but one mentioned it.
- **Illumine**: Alzheimer’s Association uses this. It tracks state legislation, regulation, and news sources.
- **Convio**: Families USA uses this but Alzheimer’s Association does not recommend it.
- **Conterra**: American Cancer Society
- **CongressPlus**: Helps with targeted grassroots but it is possible to create this type of database without this software. Can email to the Hill for no additional cost.
- **CapWeb**: NAMI
- **Democracy Data Corp**: ABA (maintains databases)

B. Staffing.

NAELA needs adequate and qualified staffing capable of carrying out each of the functions described below. While the Task Force cannot predict with confidence the number and qualifications of additional staff needed to implement an aggressive grass roots plan, it is instructive to examine the partial data we have on the level of effort at the federal level of the groups we contacted. Most have several lobbyists or policy staff who do content analysis and direct advocacy on
the Hill, plus additional staff to handle the grass roots networking component. These are approximate numbers based on the interviews:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Member Size</th>
<th>Annual Revenue</th>
<th>Policy/Lobbying Staff</th>
<th>Grass Roots Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alzheimer’s</td>
<td>Direct mail donor list of 3 to 4 million, Advocacy list of about 20,000</td>
<td>$79.8 mill (2004)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABA</td>
<td>400,000</td>
<td>$109 mill (2006)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1 + 1 state leg. tracker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACS</td>
<td>Over 3 million volunteers and 10,000 recent advocates</td>
<td>$977.8 mill (2005)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Info. Requested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATLA</td>
<td>58,000</td>
<td>Info. Requested</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARC</td>
<td>140,000</td>
<td>Info. Requested</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAMI</td>
<td>Grassroots listserv of 15,000 to 16,000</td>
<td>$8.3 mill</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCPSSM</td>
<td>1 mill paid (3-4 mill unpaid)</td>
<td>Info. Requested</td>
<td>Info. Requested</td>
<td>Info. Requested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOSSCR</td>
<td>3,300</td>
<td>Info. Requested</td>
<td>Info. Requested</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Alzheimer’s Association – 3 policy staff and 1 FTE to manage grass roots operations.
- American Bar Association – Ten full-time lobbyists, plus one FT professional who runs the grass roots action network, and one FT professional who tracks state legislation.
- American Cancer Society – About 12 lobbyists. Size of grass roots staff not obtained.
- American Trial Lawyers Association – 9 lobbyists, plus 6 full-time grass roots staff, expanding to 7 in 2007.
- ARC/United Cerebral Palsy -- 5 full-time lobbyists at the federal level, one person who is in charge of communications and two clerical staff. Their chapters do state advocacy.
- National Alliance on Mental Illness – Uses 2 professional lobbyists as needed. The executive director and an administrative assistant maintain the database, website and newsletter. There is one staff person dedicated to education and one to information and resources.
- National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare – Staffing data not received, but this is primarily an advocacy group that operates only by direct mail to the public.
• National Organization of Social Security Claims Reps – Staffing data not obtained.

C. Developing Target Audiences
There are three key audiences to develop.

• The first audience is our membership. This group has three levels to it: (1) the membership at large, (2) our members who choose to join our grass roots action network, and (3) our members who have personal connections to elected or executive branch officials and who agree to be part of our “grass tops” network.

• The second audience is our State Chapters.

• The third audience is made up of the clients and families of our membership and of state or local groups who have interests in common with those clients and families. The development strategies for each of these audiences is discussed below.

1. Our Membership
Need to provide advocacy education and opportunities for effective advocacy. The membership at large may be called upon when advocacy requires a full-court press by the entire organization. Otherwise, we learned from the grass roots experience of other organizations that it is important to identify those members who are willing to put additional effort into advocacy and who want to be kept more informed of our advocacy efforts. This group makes up our pro-active network that, up till this point in time, we have called the “Grass Roots Action Network.” Our past experience in developing this network has been disappointing, in part because of lack of sufficient staffing to develop it, and in part because the vision and long-range plan for this constituency has not been adequately developed.

➢ Key Development Strategies for Membership at Large:
• Provide advocacy education -- through Chapters and at NAELA meetings. (Alzheimer’s Association offers a 2-hour advocacy education training to members as well as annual Policy Forums that generate advocacy materials.)
• Provide policy updates on our web site and at the Public Policy “Happy Hour” at the annual Symposium and Institute.
• Plan DC advocacy events at every Symposium and Institute.
• Plan an advocacy track at every quadrennial Symposium in Washington, DC.
• Piggyback a policy advocacy event onto another organization’s event such as the Alzheimer’s Association annual policy conference.
• Recruit membership into the Grass Roots Advocacy Network, our most active advocates.
Key Strategies for the Grass Roots Advocacy Network (or whatever name is used):
These are members who have an interest in policy advocacy and who will commit to “Shake Rattle Enroll” in return for Issues Updates, Action Alerts, and Invitations to NAELA policy advocacy events. In other words, they are willing to Shake hands with elected or appointed officials (i.e., get to know and support them); Rattle their cages when needed by emailing / calling them on key issues; and Enroll their clients and clients’ family members in efforts to understand and act on public policy matters.

• Consider a catchy name/acronym, e.g.: Become a GRANI – Grass Roots Advocacy Network Instigator; or a NAG – NAELA Advocacy Group; or a NAT – NAELA Advocacy team.
• Provide real benefits for belonging to the network. See the Network Operation discussion below
• Make expectations clear to members of the network
  o Contacting elected officials when asked
  o Informing NAELA of those contacts, or using our system to contact them (Cap Wiz or its successor)
  o Effort to develop family/client/local interest group advocacy efforts
• Communication Tree – Create a communication tree for both Federal and State purposes. Example of such a structure –
  o NAELA will have a committee that will be at level one.
  o The level one members will contact one or two members in each state at level two.
  o Then each of these members at level two will contact 5 plus members within their state at level three.
  o Then each of these level three members will contact 5 plus members within their state at level four, and so on....
This will allow for the rapid flow of information to NAELA members. But more importantly, it will place responsibility on each of the members to extract the necessary information or responses from the members below them, and provide such information or responses to the members above them. This should be more reliable than an email blast to members in general, with no ability to determine whether action has been taken.

Membership and Grass Roots Action Network Measurable Goals:
• Number of active members of Grass Roots Network
• Number of Key Contacts in the States
• Establishment of annual NAELA Day on the Hill
• Tracking responses generated through CAP WIZ
• Updates sent to network at least monthly
• Annual polling process put in place to develop priorities
Email confirmation that the action has been taken

- **Key Strategies for Developing Our "Grass Tops" members.**
  
  “Grass Tops” refers to individuals who have some level of personal relationship with a state and/or federal politician. This strategy can be difficult but can be very effective and is utilized by the Alzheimer’s Association, the ARC, and the ABA, among others. Since NAELA has members who are running or have run for state office, this approach could prove effective if those relationships are developed. NAELA has attempted to develop this strategy in the past by surveying the membership regarding their personal connections to elected officials or to the executive branch. That approach could be revitalized with periodic solicitations by email, a website survey, or snail mail survey. Using the example of the ABA, every member in a leadership position should be expected not only to become part of the grass roots network, but also to complete such a survey.

  It could also be helpful to determine which members have political experience on the Hill or in state legislatures. This information can be stored in a database to be used for campaigns targeting specific districts or for generalized campaigns. Based on the interviews, NAELA should attempt to encourage these identified members to develop their relationships as well as encourage other members to foster new relationships.

  One consideration necessary for this component of any advocacy effort is respect for the personal relationships being utilized here. Members with such relationships may understandably want to keep that information confidential and may not want their use of personal communications made public. Moreover, the advocacy efforts of these members are more behind the scenes and discretely one-on-one than other forms of advocacy. The following development strategies are recommended:

  - Survey Grass Roots Advocacy Network to identify those with special connections to elected and appointed officials.
  - Make participation in any “grass tops” survey an expectation for all NAELA leadership positions.
  - Personal contact with these members to request them to take specific actions.
  - Make sure grass tops members are invited to special fundraising events
  - Hill fly-ins on appropriate issues
  - Alternative recognition and thank-you’s for members of this group as appropriate to their desire for discretion
Measurable Goals for Grass Tops Development:
- Number of active members in our Grass Tops group
- Number of personal contacts utilized in a year
- NAELA should have at least one member in every Congressional District principally responsible for being the Grass Top Person for the Congressional Representative of that District.
- To that end, membership needs to be polled to determine who has any personal relationships or contacts with either their Representative, their Senator or key members of their staff, such that they will become the Grass Top Member for that Congressional District or Senatorial State.

2. Our Chapters
Need to provide support in training, advocacy, lobbying, networking, and communications. State advocacy would also rest primarily on the State Chapters.

- Key Strategies for Developing chapters:
  - Offer advocacy training or subsidize training.
  - Conduct monthly teleconference calls with all chapter Public Policy Liaisons along with all other state PP Liaison.
  - Distribute a Public Policy Advocates Guide, at least annually.
  - Establish a web-based State Chapter Clearinghouse on state policy issues and advocacy. (This could also incorporate information from states without chapters, but the value of chapters would be obvious. It would be the next generation of what we tried to do with our Public Policy Liaison). Alzheimer’s Association and ABA have created a State Clearinghouse that details relevant bills introduced in each state, and this list is sent out to membership. They also send a technical assistance manual on state lobbying law.
  - Provide a web-based clearinghouse service. For example, state chapters can link to the Capwiz site for state-specific issues (The ARC). There is an additional cost for this service but state chapters help with that cost. Additionally, the ARC’s state chapters arrange days at the capital in their respective state capitols (like Hill Days in DC).
  - Actively support Chapters in these efforts, e.g., The ARC has bi-monthly, hour-long calls with state chapter heads to update each other on issues and share action alerts.
  - Have Chapters identify Key Issues Experts in state (similar to the current Public Policy Liaison).
  - Utilize the Chapters as primary conduit in activating members on federal policy issues.
Key Problems in Network Development:
- Most organizations lack specific goals
- Most organizations limit advocacy to current members

Measurable Goals:
- Number of Chapter advocacy trainings
- Number of Chapters actively supporting the State Clearinghouse
- Number of Chapters utilizing paid staff or consultants to do advocacy

3. Our Member’s Clients and Families and Local Groups.

NAELA needs to support members in developing an advocacy database, integrated into a marketing function that identifies those who are interested and able to act on issues.

At the first level this involves clients and their families.

Key Strategies for Developing Client/Family Network:

- Enable members to easily transmit advocacy information to the folks in their database and vice versa; members should be able to use advocacy information in their practice (newsletters, etc.) and should be able to upload or get information to our grassroots targets easily and effectively. This element in particular will have several levels and some of this is already provided, for example getting letters out to Congress on particular issues.
- Educate/market/train to our members to inform them of benefit of system beyond the impact of advocacy; there needs to be some way to alert the membership about how to link, purchase, lease or otherwise hook into a program or data base that will help them “touch” their clients and referral sources on a regular basis.
- Provide monthly or semi-monthly news and examples of interest on issues for this group, so that members can drop it into newsletters or other communications. The information provided should be easily adaptable so that it can be used as part of the member’s marketing function.
- Provide information to member’s clients, family, and interest groups regarding:
  - Background of issue and action needed. This can be incorporated in the same marketing function mentioned above.
  - Members of Congress or others to be contacted.
- Web Stickers: Capwiz provides “stickers” which are links that members can put on their own websites to link up with advocacy materials and action alerts.
Grassroots Task Force Recommendations
Oct. 27, 2006
Page 10 of 13

- Provide a way for members to upload vignettes of client situations impacted by current policy changes or proposals.
- If possible, create a system so that the member is made aware right away that his client, family, or interest group has contacted the targeted leader.

**Measurable Goals:**
- Number of members with an advocacy data base
- Number of members regularly distributing news and information via a mailing of some sort

At a second level, this effort needs to focus on local groups with interests in common with clients and families. These groups would include organizations and businesses such as condo associations and assisted living companies and geriatric care groups. NAELA can support members in reaching these groups by providing advocacy information and resources for working with and through these groups when appropriate.

- **Key Strategies for Developing State/Local Common Interest Groups:**
  - Provide instruction on the need for and steps to create such an interest group list for both advocacy and marketing purposes.
  - Provide monthly or semi-monthly news and examples of interest on issues for this group, so that members can drop it into newsletters or other communications.
  - The information provided will be easily adaptable so that it can be used as part of the member’s marketing function.
  - Provide Talking Points for key issues to be used by our members in seeking action by these groups.

**Measurable Goals:**
- Number of members with a local groups advocacy distribution list or data base
- Number of members regularly distributing news and info via a mailing of some sort

III. **Network Action**

A. **Getting Information Out Regularly**

- **Key Strategies for Regular Communication:**
  - Provide monthly or semi-monthly news and examples of interest to keep members informed which are simple enough so that members
can drop this into newsletters or other communications to clients and community groups.

- Conduct monthly teleconference calls of all chapter Public Policy Liaisons along with all other state PP Liaison. (This was also listed as a key strategy for developing the network.)
- Provide a way for members to upload vignettes of client situations impacted by current policy changes or proposals.
- Suggest that there be a public policy component added to The NAELA eBulletin, such that it can be used as an additional means to disseminate information of importance on public policy issues.

NOTES:
- The ARC sends out a Monday newsletter of approximately 100 words per issue with a quick update on each issue. Those newsletters contain information about alerts and calls to action. They also send a Washington Watch, which is closer to 10-12 pages in greater detail to members less frequently.
- ARC also reinforces their messages to their members by several different touches, principally electronically, so that the members come to fully appreciate those items which are of the greatest importance/urgency in the eyes of the organization leadership.
- Alzheimer’s Association sends a Federal Update regularly to chapter president and other public policy staff. Action alerts are sent out on a targeted basis to members.
- AARP Monthly Bulletin glosses over their many issue areas and includes calls to action.

**Measurable Goals:**
- Frequency and regularity of information updates
- Attendance at a NAELA event on the Hill
- Tracking responses generated through CAP WIZ or e-mail confirmation that the action has been taken
- Updates sent to network at least monthly
- Annual polling process put in place to develop priorities
- # of client vignettes collected

**B. Generating Immediate Action Response**

- **Key Strategies for Immediate Action Response:**
  - **Action Alerts.**
    - Utilize a target-group specific email *Action Alert* system asking for specific actions (sign petitions, write letters/emails, send donations for lobbying efforts) when needed in response to legislative/regulatory developments.
Grassroots Task Force Recommendations  
Oct. 27, 2006  
Page 12 of 15

- Include *Smart Alerts* for members to thank Legislators. Alerts can “thank or spank” legislators (commend or disapprove of their vote/action)
- Utilize web-based software to enable direct email to Senators or Representative or to key staffers. (See *Structural Needs* under “I. Network Development” above)
- In communications, be very specific and make the desired action as easy as possible (NOSSCR advice).
- Identify most active advocates and create a special mailing list for these members (ACS).
- Continue to use eBlasts to alert all members via email of need for action on priority items. Take into consideration that this approach should be used sparingly, so as not to diminish the importance of an action item which comes over via eBlast. (ARC) This should not be used in lieu of the communication tree, but in addition to it.
- Consider whether a Public Policy newsletter should be circulated via email. Weekly is not realistic, but monthly may work. Include reference therein to any action alerts and provide links to the contact mechanism which is being requested.

- **800- Number.** Utilize a service such as the AARP 1-800 call-in number. AARP uses a service that provides an 800 number that members can call, input their zip code, and be directed to their state or federal legislator’s office. The 800 number has a recorded message that advises members how to proceed.

- **Hill Visits:**
  - Utilize NAELA consultant and member visits to the Hill. The ARC gives advocacy materials to members and the members take the materials to the Hill to their respective representatives. They do this during times they are not engaged in a major campaign as it acts to educate members on how to engage their representatives so they are ready for major campaigns.
  - Hill Fly-ins on appropriate issues.

- **Call on Grass Tops Members --** To make the phone call or visit to the targeted elected official or staff on an issue needing attention and action.

- **Generate Media Support:**
  - Send Grass Roots Advocacy Network/Chapters/Key Persons template Op-Eds and Letters to the Editor
  - Organize coordinated national and local press events, around policy developments, white papers, reports, etc.
Measurable Goals:
- We have a list of the GrassTop members from every Congressional District as well as an additional one for each State responsible for the Senate contacts.
- Review CAP WIZ response rates to put a number on the response rates we have to the requests for action.

IV. NETWORK RETENTION AND RECOGNITION

Key Strategies for Network Retention and Recognition:
- Regularly update grass roots database.
- Do not go to members too often or overdue crisis communications (NOSSCR). Realize that some people are not politically oriented (Alzheimer’s Association).
  NOTE: It is especially important to recognize that NAELA members who are not already involved may not get involved until:
  - An issue affects/involves a client
  - Business is likely to be affected
  - A “local” issue can be solved, will benefit from contact with a local official, member of state legislature, etc...
- Communicate to members how her/his effort whether alone or joined with others’ actually made a difference—the member will be more inspired to encourage clients to act or to act her/himself at a higher level.
- Send personalized Thank You emails: Spruce up letters with facts, statistics and links. When “we” learn someone has stretched her/himself to take a stand, it would be great to recognize that. A thank you signed by the NAELA President, or by some other NAELA officer might be especially meaningful. A letter could be “created” by the Public Policy committee for that signature.
- Incorporate into Kellen’s annual media presentation at the Symposium recognition of those who were actively involved in advocacy efforts and a summary of the past-year’s accomplishments. This would be good especially if people in addition to the few who are always out there are recognized in some way.
- Spotlight Top Activists in newsletters, on the web, at meetings. For example, work with Good and Welfare committee or Membership committee to find a way to recognize the effort in the NAELA News, or through special recognition in other publications.
- Publish especially good letters to the editor or to legislators that members have sent...as well as those they received in response. These provide exemplary models.
- Institute a Formal Recognition Program. Recognition at Public Policy Happy Hour. One idea is to create a fun challenge -- any member who
provides a letter or e-mail received from a member of state legislator, governor, or congressperson provide a copy in exchange for an award of glass of wine or a beer at happy hour...

- Conduct a session at each Symposium – “Pearls and Gems of Successful Advocacy.” Recall the session at the DC Symposium where people from several states presented their ideas. Keep that up but with more and new ideas.
- Work with Chapters to find and recognize at least one person from each state for special recognition in policy advocacy each year.

NOTES: Recognition tends to be the lowest priority surveyed amongst Capitol Advantage’s clients but it produces the best return on investment – recognition encourages members to participate in future action requests or campaigns.

**Measurable Goals:**
- Frequency of data base clean-up
- # persons formally recognized in some way each year
- Institution of a formal thank you reception or other event
- Number of “hits” and as we can find them, and number of individuals who send messages which we can track...
- Number of responses from members of Congress or state legislature when members take some action.

**V. Next Steps**

The Task Force submits this report to the Board seeking an overall endorsement of the report’s content. Further, it recommends a continuation of the process the Task Force has begun to identify more specifically the costs, resources, and the work of NAELA committees (e.g. Technology, Long-Range Planning, Finance, Public Policy) that will be necessary to implement the report in its entirety, in part, or not at all.

In addition, the report addresses a number of issues that can be addressed or pursued by the Public Policy Committee without delay. This will be done.

If the Board decides to move ahead with this blueprint for action, there are several implementation steps to be considered:

- The data base and software capability is a structural precondition to the functioning of the grass roots network. The report refers to many software options available and used by different groups. The task of examining the software options and evaluating whether they can meet our needs in a cost effective way may be an effort the Technology Committee is particularly suited to pursue. The Appendix provides a profile of the capability of Cap Wiz, which is
software already used in our government affairs work. This review provides a starting point for a task that should be a first priority in developing the grassroots network.

- The functional development of the different target groups identified (members at large/grass roots action network/clients-families-local groups) can be taken on at the same time or segmented over time, or prioritized in the use of resources. The Board must decide on the parameters of its vision. The degree to which these networks are developed for policy advocacy will determine the additional staffing needed to achieve success, for additional staffing at some level will be needed. The network development work requires the personal skills to inspire members, the policy understanding to explain issues, the administrative skills to manage data and move information quickly and effectively, and the tenacity to keep pushing year round.

- It is also important to keep in mind that the networking development function is different from the policy analysis and lobbying function, although both work hand-in-hand in the organizations we interviewed. At the Chapter level, we found that the groups with strong state grassroots capability commonly had staff dedicated to those specific functions. Therefore, staffing decisions at the national level need to be thought out in a way that maximizes the complimentarity, teamwork, coordination, and skills of the staff.
Appendix 1:
GRASS ROOTS TASK FORCE SURVEY RESULTS

AARP

INTERVIEWED:
Ed Burtonshaw

What are the key components of your federal grassroots networks?
There is a state office in all 50 states and we have staff and volunteers at state level, these people become liaisons with members of congress at district level. Activist database can be reached by email or snail mail and ask them to take an action, make phone calls, send emails, attend meetings. Database is structured by issues based on interests of specific member so they are more likely to take action. These are people who have taken action in the past and we asked them if they could be put in this database. Membership database is broken down into interests like above.

What are the key components of your state grassroots networks?
In each state there is at least one advocacy staff person and a strong cadre of advocacy volunteers. They work on both state and federal issues and develop relationships with state and federal leaders.

What kinds of informational materials do you provide to members?
Most pervasive is AARP Bulletin on a monthly basis to all AARP households, discussing most important issues. When engaged in a campaign, bulletin contains calls to action. It is a big expense to communicate with all members. 4 times a year state offices communicate with members in each state. Email alerts. We have Capwiz, and have been trying to refine it. In the future AARP will redo their website to make it more user-friendly to reach legislators (too many clicks). Don’t go too in depth with information, just highlight, bulleted key points. If people want technical information we send them to the website which has much more detail.

What means do you use to communicate with federal elected officials via your grassroots network?
Capwiz and phone calls – can call 800 number input zip code and you get directed to state or federal legislator’s office. Company records message on the 800 number, AARP pays for that service.

How many members get actively involved in your network?
Hard to say, only a small portion of the AARP membership get actively involved, since membership is so large. During election time we mail information about candidates, so that’s a passive role that members can take.
What should do or not do? Advice?

Many groups have specific interests and goals; AARP is all over the map. We have to educate members on the issue before they can take action.

Interviewed by Brian Lindberg’s staff

AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION

INTERVIEWED:
Julie Strandlie and Brook Meling
Governmental Affairs Office

KEY COMPONENTS:
Staffing: It’s only Julie (a lobbyist) and her assistant Brook, both full-time, but Julie also has lobbying responsibilities in her issues area (Access to Legal Services). There are about 10 full-time ABA lobbyists total and they feed her the material on their assigned issues (summaries, talking points, etc). The ABA uses an annual survey of its leadership to identify and prioritize 12 issues, on which they focus their energies. The current issues are:

• Access to Legal Services
• Access to Legal Education
• Anti-Terrorism
• Federal Tort Law
• Immigration
• Independence of the Judiciary
• Independence of the Legal Profession
• Public Safety and the Preservation of Civil Liberties
• Rule of Law - International
• Tax Simplification
• U.S. Patent and Trademark Office Funding
• Youth-at-Risk

There is also a separate full-time professional staff person who runs a State Legislative Clearinghouse. Positioned within the GAO, the SLC coordinates work with bar leaders and manages legislative advocacy listservs tailored to serve bar professionals. Along with this website, the SLC maintains a library that includes information on state legislatures, Congressional updates, bill tracking, policy briefs, white papers and news articles on over 200 policy issues.

The organization’s Media Affairs Division also coordinates closely with all aspects of the work of Governmental Affairs, focusing on press releases, op-ed pieces, and facilitating media coverage in general. Media kits and backgrounders for the press are on a separate part of the ABA web site.
**Approach:** All of Julie's focus is on federal issues. Don't do state level lobbying, although State Bars often use stuff they have written on issues (such as tort reform). These materials often go to State bar leaders through the separately staffed State Legislative Clearinghouse.

Most of the lobbying focuses on “Grass Tops” efforts—they have developed database of member connections to elected federal officials and call on these ABA members to make personal contact. The data base is developed through personal contact, a web survey on the Grass Roots web page, and this year, the incoming ABA president has required, as a condition of any appointed leadership post within the ABA, that each person complete the grass roots survey form. They operate on the premise that it is personal contact that tips the balance on issues.

**Components:**

1. Most important piece is the annual ABA day, a 2 ½ day function wherein ABA members and state bar leaders come in for training, issues briefing, a reception with members of Congress, and a day of Hill visits. About 235 came this year, representing about 45 states, and they focused on four issues in their Hill visits. The event has been growing and becoming more successful each year. Next year, they are instituting Access to Justice awards, one for a member of Congress, one for a state bar, and one for an individual ABA member.
2. Confidants List – This a data base that enables them to identify who knows whom and what issues they are interested in, so that they can utilize personal contact on as many issues as possible. This list is the Grassroots Action Network List.
3. Email communications. These will be highly targeted Alerts or requests and not blast e-mails. There is also a targeted listserve, just on LSC issues.
4. Governmental Affairs and Grass Roots web page, containing lots of material on issues. Go to: www.abanet.org/poladv
5. The daily *Washington Summary*, which abstracts the *Congressional Record* and the *Federal Register* to highlight congressional action on legislation and proposed rules and regulations of federal agencies of interest to bar entities; and the monthly *Washington Letter*, which provides in-depth discussion of major governmental activities and legislation affecting the legal profession, as well as details of ABA involvement in the policymaking process. Other staff in the Information Services Division publishes these. All governmental affairs staff feed in information into them.
6. Miscellaneous resources, e.g., they are working on an Advocacy Manual

**Data Bases:** The ABA used to use CongressPlus and *Capital Advantage* for grassroots but discontinued in favor of *Democracy Data Corp* (DDC), which also provides the *Capitol Connect* website. DDC was chosen as their primary data base because it integrates with the ABA membership database, so whenever membership data changes, it automatically changes in DDC. The data are sortable by address, Congressional
District, zip code, whether the person is a member of the Grassroots Action Network, who their contacts are with, what Section they belong to, whether they hold a leadership position in the ABA, and more.

Interestingly, they recently added CongressPlus back, but primarily for emailing letters to the Hill, because it has a function that enables you to identify and email to Congressional staff at no additional charge (a big advantage over Capitol Connect which charges extra for that). CongressPlus also has some grassroots functions, which the ABA has used. But because of the size and complexity of our data, we continue to use DDC for our grassroots database.

Cap Advantage was very expensive for emailing to the hill (this is for policy letters, not grassroots), and it keeps the grass roots member records on its site, with little, if any, data transfer. There was no way to transfer the ABA membership system to Cap Advantage and keep it automatically updated. For groups whose database is small, and it doesn't matter where they store their data, Cap Advantage is fine. Or CongressPlus, as long as the participants are active enough to keep their address information current. And with Cap Advantage, you can publish your action alerts to the web. The ABA does do that, so it wasn't a big advantage.

Other Comments: A good resource to register with is the Grass Roots Roundtable, sponsored by DDC with meetings usually held at the US Chamber of Commerce. It is open to anyone. You just need to register and get on their list. They have very good information sessions.

Link: http://www.grassrootsroundtable.org/default.asp

Hardest challenge of ABA advocacy is the multiplicity of issues that members are interested in and the differing views that members take on issues. Certain state bar leaders are most active and some bars are virtually dormant on policy advocacy.

The most important things are as follows:
1. Have leadership/management buy-in and enthusiastic support.
2. Have a database for keeping track of information regarding your members, who their Members of Congress are, and whom they know; plus records tracking what you've asked them to do, and what they've done.
3. Develop a recruitment effort to encourage NELA members to develop relationships with their Members, and to identify who really knows Members very well.
4. Have a regular program to encourage in-person meetings; DC is best, but district based would work for NEALA since there are chapters to coordinate locally.

Interviewed by Charlie Sabatino
Grassroots Task Force Recommendations
Oct. 27, 2006
Page 20 of 23

AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY

INTERVIEWED:
Timothy Tibbs
Field Advocacy Specialist
State Level (California)
Grassroots Coordinator, California Division

American Cancer Society grassroots efforts focus on local, state and federal level issues. One major focus of the organization is lung cancer. A typical issue locally might involve tobacco control ordinances. At the state level, regulations regarding tobacco would still be significant, plus access-to-care and related funding. At the federal level, legislation regarding tobacco plus funding issues for care and research would be significant.

1. **What are the key components of your federal grassroots networks?**

   The volunteers / activists are “tiered” as to their involvement. At the top are "Legislative Ambassadors," a core of 5 – 600 volunteers who have experience and the drive to stay involved. These folks are the primary team who are involved with the actual contact with elected legislators and officials. This group will form the core of the national ACS “Celebration on the Hill” Sept. 20, 2006. Eight “ambassadors” from each state will be involved, with several legislators participating. They will do a “Relay for Life” on the Mall, modeled after the local “relays” which are their national signature event, primarily for fund-raising; the purpose of this national event is to raise awareness, not funds.

   They also have approximately 25,000 “E-Activists” who are notified when some sort of action is needed. Tim states that they can truly count on approximately 2000 of these folks.

   Volunteers come from a variety of entrance points, but since virtually every family has been touched by cancer in some way, it is hard to track. Tim believes many enter because they have been involved with the various relays for life, and come from the ranks of survivors, caregivers, and family. In addition, the national structure of support groups for different diseases is a natural entry-point (Breast Cancer support groups, “Every Man Counts” for prostate disease, etc.

   Their Washington office staff is large, including about a dozen registered lobbyists at their National Government Relations Department. Lobbyists focus on particular issues such as “Tobacco,” Access-to-care, plus a dedicated Republican and Democratic lobbyist as examples.

   ACS grassroots effort have shifted from the (c)(3) emphasis to the newly formed (c)(4). Their (c)(4) is ACSCAN [at www.acscan.org.] Much of their lobbying effort takes place through this organization. The website is rich with information about how
volunteers and those interested can access the process. The change to the (c)(4) has enabled them to exert more legislative pressure, formulate questions more easily, and prepare voter guides. This can be used for fund-raising for legislative issues as opposed to fund-raising for research.

2. **What are the key components of your state grassroots network?**

   The California staff, and some of the national staff, are based in Sacramento. One registered lobbyist is in that office; the position is currently being filled temporarily by their VP of Government Relations who is a registered lobbyist, but with a staff of 10 people.

   A staff member is assigned to each of separate “access to care” issues. Funding is obtained from California general funds for such care to individuals, based on their disease (eg. prostate, breast or lung cancer). This funding is separate from and in addition to funds available through various Medicaid or Medicare programs; it appears they lobby intensively and attend hearings etc. on these issues frequently.

3. **What kinds of informational materials do you provide to members or people your members serve?**

4. **What means do you use to communicate with Federal elected officials via your grassroots network?**

   Nearly all of the communication with volunteers is electronic; they do not use newsletters and try to limit the “e-blast” types of communiqué. They emphasize not calling for assistance too frequently and with the E-Activists, try to rotate the calls for help. They rely on the Ambassadors for personal contact with legislators and for appearance at hearings, etc.

   They currently use *Conterra* for their customer relations’ management software (for the e-mail list). Their volunteer database is used more for fundraising than for legislative issues. They emphasize “planned giving” and this is a major thrust of the fund-raising, along with the “Relays for Life.”

Submitted by
Doris E. Hawks

**ALZHEIMER’S ASSOCIATION**

**INTERVIEWED:**
Steve McConnell and Mike Splain
Mike drew a bull’s eye. Series of concentric circles, starting with staff of the national (Steve, Mike, Bonnie Hogue, Jennier Zeitzer), then state chapters, then the local communities.

Mike – It’s important to realize that some people are not politically oriented. We try to educate and draw people into public policy advocacy. Tell them why it’s important to engage. I go to a chapter and do a board briefing, then I work with their public policy leadership in whatever shape it is in; and then the third step is advocacy training. Anyone who wanted to come to a 2 hour advocacy education program was trained. Got a lot of people to show up. Our underlying sales pitch is: advocacy is giving voice, its even healing.

We also have the annual Policy Forum, and it now brings a lot of people in. Largest Alzheimer’s lobby day will be Missouri with 500 plus expected.

State advocacy – we aim for capacity building at state level. We do education about structure and leadership, and have developed a state clearinghouse information function. The “Call” was originally just a list of state bills sent out a few times a year. Now we target one or two issues and have tried to guide the chapters (on Medicaid the last 2 years). National does a lot of analytical assistance. Environmental scans of the law are done also.

Early state policy history – people were motivated around Alzheimer’s-centric issues. We have now moved them from a base of easily winnable and doable issue, and have moved to tougher issues, eg. LTC reform. The capstone of our effort has been to make matching grants to chapters to hire skilled public policy staff. It is easiest to mobilize our people around research funding. We put a face on the issue.

Nationally, we subscribe to database that pulls out particular state legislation. We do the analysis on selected issues and send it back. Illumine.org is the database for tracking state leg, even does regulation’s and news sources. Very cheap, too.

Materials: We send out a Federal Update regularly to Public Policy people plus chapter presidents and our Delegate Assembly. When we are in a campaign mode, we send out Action Alerts on a targeted basis (over 20 last year). Annual Public Policy Forum produces lots of materials, Issue Kits are sent to Chapter Public Policy Chairs. We had a Quarterly Newsletter for a while but it consumed too much time. We put it to death.

We provide chapters with a state technical assistance manual on state lobbying law. Some chapters have a registered lobbyist. Mike guessed that of 25 state coordinators, 20 have to register as lobbyists.

We also utilize letters to editor and op eds through the network. Also do coordinated press events nationally and locally. Firm they used to work with takes digital pictures
and feeds the pictures and news release back to home market. The firm does the National Teachers Award for NSF. You need strong media support in your efforts.

Our folks are getting more sophisticated, eg using Families USA web site and listserv.

Other organizational models – they mentioned John Samuelson – Parkinson’s Advocacy Network. They don’t have chapters, but they have a point person in each Congressional District

We use a computer based customer relations management software for email. For some, we still have to rely on snail mail. There are various software systems out there for constituent management stuff. Mike doesn’t recommend their vendor Convio (used by Diabetes, Families, Move-On). Prefer Conterra -- 8 or 9 Chapters also use Conterra for advocacy, all use it for fundraising. Congress Plus – helps you do targeted grass roots, but you can create that database on your own.

How many members? We have chapters, and we have mailing lists. One of which is an advocacy mailing list. Also have donor mailing lists. Chapters – about 11 states have more than one chapter and 10 chapters are multi state.

For grass roots management, we have about 1 FTE, but a little more when in full gear on an issue.

We have a Direct mail donor list of 3 to 4 million people. Our Advocacy list is about 20,000 or so.

Newer trends:
The early stage Alzheimer’s disease constituency is a new group they are now activating.
Steve: We are now investing in “grass tops” strategy We are convinced that it is through people who have access to legislators who can make a difference, e.g. they are big contributors.

The American Cancer Society has created a (c)(4) -- allows them to do surveys of candidates and publish findings.

Interviewed by Charlie Sabatino

THE ARC

INTERVIEWED:
Marti Ford, registered lobbyist
ARC & UCP {The Association of Retarded Citizens and United Cerebral Palsy, respectively} have one shared policy office. The two organizations have pooled policy expenses. Some are paid by ARC and others are paid by UCP. The history she personally has is more with the ARC. ARC’s individual members join a local chapter, and are then enrolled with the State Chapter and then through the State Chapter become part of the national organization for which she works.

UCP has various membership organizations that join onto it, and as a cooperative of organizations, does not have individual members in the same way that ARC does. Some of what ARC does will kind of match with NAELA in terms of how our public policy coordination is done. They are loaded with active volunteers at every level. They've got both paid staff and volunteers involved in their policy activities.

Her office does not really do things that are State focused, except in those circumstances when they are helping coordinate a State Waiver application between a state and CMS. Other than that, for State issues it’s usually the state Chapter that does advocacy and sometimes they have paid lobbyists. They’re state people are pretty critical in their system, but are pretty overwhelmed with State issues.

They’ve got five full-time lobbyists at the federal level, one person who is in charge of communications and two clerical staff. Each of the five lobbyists has their own specific areas of expertise and is registered. They only focus on federal. The five are it in terms of registered lobbyists for ARC. Some of the state level folks may be registered for their actions in their own state but are probably not registered nationally. ARC does not use outside lobbyists, but UCP sometimes does on a project basis.

One point she kept re-iterating is that they have really incorporated the internet effectively in their efforts to communicate with State Chapters and their individual members. Capwiz is the program they use for their action center on their website. {The company name might be Capital Advantage} They bought only a bit of their system in ARC and UCP bought more. They have the eblasts to get people to write a letter or become aware of an issue and the required response. They’ve added to that an eblast notice to people that there was an action up, so that they know to go to the action page on the website.

They can see how many letters go in to which Congressman or Department head. They’re system receives a copy of every letter sent through their system, which she’s found helpful. GETWISE is another group that does the tracking like Capwiz.

The ARC is about to launch a new website where the State’s have had links. They’ve got a couple of State Chapters that keep very active and link into the Capwiz action center for State specific issues. This ability comes as an additional cost, but the State Chapter shares some of the cost with ARC’s national office to permit the feature.
They also send out a Monday newsletter of about 100 words per issue, with a quick update on various issues. Major alerts are a part of that notice. That goes to every state and every local chapter of ARC. Individuals can also sign up to be recipients of that list.

She gave me an example of the varying responses they have had to action alerts. On one item of significant importance, the alert went out just as Hurricane Katrina was hitting shore. They got only five people who logged in and responded to the request of the action alert to write a letter, due to everyone’s attention nationally being focused on the devastation in the Gulf States. In contrast, at another time, they had an action alert regarding a regulation on very technical esoteric rule-making issue and got 900 responses of letters generated.

They try to increase the likelihood that someone will pick up the action alert and do what it asks. One of the ways she felt they do this is by repeating the message and the urgency of the alert in the variety ways they touch their members electronically and personally.

About twice a month they have an hour-long phone call with the State Chapters with updates on what’s happening with the issues and they alert people then that action alerts are coming out. By the time it hits and becomes a big issue, they’ve heard enough about it to know what a big issue it is and that they really do need to take the time to act on it.

They have another publication called Washington Watch distributed electronically, where people are getting a more in-depth discussion of an issue. It’s about ten or twelve pages. They’ve stopped printing and mailing things from the policy office. Everything they do from a policy perspective is electronic.

Once a year they put on an annual seminar and have done it in recent years with other groups who have similar interests. They had from 100 to 300 people when it was just ARC, but in branching out to other similar groups, they now have almost 500 at their annual seminar. One of the neat things they did, which I thought may be good for our membership is that they give handouts to the 500 participants and the participants walk the handouts up to the Hill to their respective members. I thought if we {NAELA} did this the years that the Symposium is in D.C., perhaps even on items of relatively small importance, then later, when an item of huge importance like the budget bill is at issue, they should be less intimidated about visiting the Congressional offices either in D.C. or in the districts.

She feels that for them, the best work that really gets things done is the ongoing communication in the district and in Washington. They, meaning members and staff, have to get to know you personally so that they know your issues and concerns. This way they turn to you for input when the issue comes up in their office or committee.
They do a lot of training of people, very similar to the steps that Brian and Charlie undertook last year to make sure that the volunteers doing the contacting of the staff and Congressional members know the right ways and wrong ways to advocate. In terms of members of their organization that they can get to actively advocate to their legislators, the 500 or so that come to the seminar are the most active and stay active through the year.

She explained that ARC, as a group is slow to develop in terms of advocacy, unlike AARP for example, she said. Just the same, one of their alerts got 7,500 responses. Interestingly, they don’t think the 7,500 is good, when they have 120,000 members. She said as a practical suggestion the cc of the responses gets sent into a separate mailbox, rather than someone’s active box. They initially made the mistake of filtering the responses back to the one of the five of them whose issue the alert related to and they’d get deluged in their email box.

We got to talking about grasstop advocacy a bit, meaning finding those in your organization or sphere of influence who exert significant influence or have access specifically with some Congressman/Senator or office. She said, the grasstops are harder, but they are effective if you could develop them. They need to develop a personal connection. In their efforts within their membership ranks they look for the person who was the college roommate of the representative or something like that to use as a door opener for access.

When talking about reaching out to people we serve in order to get them active from a grassroots perspective, she suggested that we consider capturing email addresses of the various people with whom we come in contact, so that people beyond our membership can be given the alert and decide whether they want to be notified of issues of interest to our members.

The State chapters have had success with a day at the capital on big issues at the state level in the various state capitals. While ARC does not do this she passed along one intense advocacy approach which she liked. One organization she knew of in D.C. has what they call “fly-ins”, sometimes just to keep their people involved on key items. They call them, fly them into town, brief the m and then send them to the Hill.

To me, this approach sounded very similar to the three days in October I spent, when I camped out in D.C. meeting with the members of the New Jersey Congressional delegation to lobby them on the Budget Bill. Each day various other NAELEA members joined me, who lived in the district of the member with whom I was meeting. I wouldn’t recommend this for everyone, but I thought it interesting that another group took a similar approach to how we, as NJ NAELEA, did in the advocacy effort. {It felt like a tale of two cities in that when I was last working on the Hill as a starving staffer seventeen years ago, I didn’t have two nickels to rub together and this time after lobbying all day I went back to The Mandarin Oriental each night to five-star luxury, but it was still invigorating to be back on the Hill.} I know of three other members of the
New Jersey group who had experience on the Hill, and they were among those who volunteered to meet members with me.

Perhaps we can compile a list of NAELA members who have Hill experience or District experience {or State level experience} and find some way to get them on a special list of action alerts or eblasts. I know we’ve tried to do this previously, in terms of Grassroots sign-ups, but perhaps we’ll get more of a response after everyone has now had to experience first-hand the negative impact of the DRA.

Marti finished our talk with the following insights of the mentality of the Hill to our issue, Medicaid. Her specialty is SSI and trust issues [d4a & d4c], so she was talking about how the OBRA 93 trust provisions for the disabled came about at the committee level in final form. She added this thought:

The provisions for pool trusts and exemptions for sole benefit trusts for the disabled were pretty hard to get. The democrats don’t like this stuff because they don’t want people with money to get Medicaid and have the mentality that if trusts are involved, it must be people with money. The republicans like trusts and helping wealthier individuals, but do not like Medicaid. It’s a huge uphill battle on both sides from our perspective. The payback provisions were put in as a trade-off of having an upper limit of the trust, which is what the members originally wanted. Other than being able to work it through detail by detail, there aren’t any real allies for our clients on the Hill. There’s not a natural source for championing our stuff, like, by comparison Sen. Kennedy and healthcare. When it comes to Medicaid and protecting the savings of disabled individuals or the elderly, neither side is really our side. She suggested that we need to keep this in mind at all times when advocating for our positions on the Hill. It will have us properly prepared for the reality we face.

She encouraged us to feel free to contact her and utilize her in any way that might be helpful if we have any SSI or trust advocacy issues on which we would like to collaborate.

Interviewed by Bob Brogan

**AMERICAN TRIAL LAWYERS ASSOCIATION**

**INTERVIEWED:**
Kristin Keckeisen,
Director of Grassroots Development
National Coordinator

1. What are the key components of Grassroots Networks?
I was placed in contact with Kristin Keckeisen, who was hired as one of two specialists to set up a grassroots program for ATLA in 2003. Since that time, the Department has grown to six (6) staff members and will expand to seven (7) in 2007.

ATLA recognized that to be successful in influencing Congress, a grassroots campaign would be needed. They used advocacy software to develop their system along with e-mail, talking points, fact sheets and sample letters to Congress. These are all available on their website and she is emailing them to me for our review. They started out using their ATLA membership as their database and have expanded it by about 50,000 non-lawyer activists. On a particular issue, she can get responses of 4,000-7,000 nationwide, since ATLA has such a broad spectrum of issues.

2. **Informational Materials**

The informational materials, which they send to members on legal issues, are much more detailed than the ones they send to non-lawyer advocates. The key is to keep it simple. Don’t overload them. Use bite size chunks. Keep one message for the whole country, so in each State or voting district the message is the same. Be consistent.

The materials are usually fact sheets and talking points on each particular issue in which ATLA becomes involved. The messages are then directed to the segment of their lists which will draw activists and volunteers to bring the issue to the State or Congressional level.

ATLA started two new programs: Key Persons Program and Action Teams.

A. **Key Person Program:** They first try and identify and recruit key persons in a State to work in that State. They then attempt to place a Key Person in each Congressional District and from there to the local Key Persons (in our case, probably to the local Councils on Aging). This gives ATLA a roadmap to follow from Key Person to Key Person and back to ATLA.

3. **Action Teams:** Depending on the program or issue they are responding to, be it Voter Registration or Voting Rights, they choose an advocate or advocacy organization for that issue and provide to them the fact sheet and position paper for each Congressional District within the State. Whatever the issue, it tends to attract activists and volunteers to support an issue. They are then added to ATLA’s database. This work is done by the ATLA Grassroots Staff who draw up and provide to the activists and the Key Persons whatever materials are needed. This helps build membership lists along with other organizations that are working on the same issues. She advised that most other organizations would let you use their membership lists for email distribution as long as you do not fundraise from these lists. However, these are sometimes hard to develop. Another area where you can add to your list is to pay an Outreach Company like *Care2.com* to add to your database lists.
4. **What means do you use to contact elected officials?**
Once the Key Persons and Action Teams are set up, the National staff sets into motion the emails, letters and phone numbers of to Congress members or Senators or someone on their Congressional staff to communicate on behalf of ATLA.

5. **How many members get involved?**
Kristen stated it is difficult to get attorneys involved due to their schedules, however, there are attorneys who will become involved in particular issues within their practice area. ATLA then contacts them and the Key Persons and the Secondary Level Key Person comes into play.

ATLA has nine (9) lobbyists in Washington. Each one works on a particular issue, such as Regulatory Issues. On many of these issues, they place a Republican and a Democrat as an ATLA liaison among members of Congress.

6. **What should we do and what should we not do?**

1. Keep it simple.
2. Don’t overload.
3. Keep written materials brief and to the point.
4. Build your database with others and form a coalition with them.
5. Pick your issues in terms of priority. Don’t send email blasts on all issues, as it discourages members if they are getting emails everyday.

Interviewed by Michael F. Loring, Esq.

**NATIONAL ALLIANCE ON MENTAL ILLNESS**

**INTERVIEWED:**
Andrew Sperling,
Director of Legislative Affairs
National Level
Susanne Homant,
Executive Director
State Level (Florida)

1. **What are the key components of your federal grassroots network?**

   Most members have a loved one with several mental illnesses. Andrew Sperling is NAMI’s registered lobbyist. NAMI has several different people who work with them at the federal level, and maintains a list serve with 15,000 to 16,000 names. Periodic emails ask members to contact Congress regarding proposed or existing legislation. NAMI uses CAPWEB to track and measure outcomes of these efforts.
7. **What are the key components of your state grassroots network?**

NAMI is the largest advocacy organization for people with mental illness living with their families. There are 32 affiliates run by volunteers with goals of advocacy and influencing public policy, particularly with respect to acceptance of mental illness. There is a full time information and referral service. NAMI concentrates on relationship building with state agencies and other organizations. Another emphasis is care for and researching a cure for mental illness.

When this organization was first started it involved primarily young people with mental illness or parents with children with mental illness. Over time, NAMI has become more aware of elderly with mental illness, especially bipolar disease and depression. Veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental health concerns are also an increasing concern.

A. **Staffing:** NAMI does not have sufficient funds for a dedicated staffing person. Suzanne Homant works and an administrative assistant maintain the database, website and newsletter. There is a staff person dedicated to education and one to information and resources, plus two professional lobbyists as needed.

B. **Data Base:** NAMI maintains donor and member databases, as well as one for fund raising. The member database has approximately 2,500 current members with approximately 4,000 classified as not current. Suzanne believes this is because many are volunteers that may not have been actively involved for a period of time.

C. **Communications Systems:** NAMI recently received funding that will be used to improve the state websites. This will include posting monthly information and a quarterly newsletter. The Florida state website is www.namifl.org. NAMI members serve on committees, boards, etc., of other organizations and work with those organizations to stay as visible as possible.

D. **Tracking System:** Apparently there is no formal way of tracking other than maintaining the database.

3. **What kinds of informational materials do you provide to members or people your members serve?**

Newsletters, websites and conferences are the basic informational material sources.

8. **What means do you use to communicate with Federal elected officials via your grassroots network?**

Predominantly by electronic means via email, newsletter and websites.

Interviewed by Lauchlin Waldoch
NATIONAL COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE SOCIAL SECURITY AND MEDICARE

INTERVIEWED:
Scott Frey

- Membership is the key to their organization. It is mostly 70+, but they are always working on the 60-70 crowd.
  - They have 1,000,000 paid members
  - They have 3,000,000 to 4,000,000 non paid members that they continue to send information to
- They use direct mail. They send out about 14-18 major mailings each year.
  - The mailings have been refined and tested.
- They also send out newsletters.
- In the mailings, they request members to send in $10 for lobbying efforts, sign petitions, and write letters.
  - The letters are pre printed.
    - While these are not as good as personal letters, he feels they let the Congress know of the support for the issue.
  - They include acknowledgements to be mailed back to them so they can get an idea who responds.
  - They use different color paper and envelopes—e.g. white letter to member, blue to sign and mail to the Congress person, and yellow acknowledgment to mail back.
- They are working on emails, but they are dealing with seniors who are not as familiar with this vein of communication; and it is common for their messages to be lost with SPAM.
- The main problems deal with lag time: when an issue presents itself, when to get out the mailing, and when to expect the needed responses. This lag time is about 2 months.
- They have a variety of experts, they have about 9 lobbyists on staff, and they have about 200 area representatives that engage in the grass root efforts when needed.

If there are more questions or needed clarification, he said we could call again.

NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF SOCIAL SECURITY CLAIMANTS REPRESENTATIVES

INTERVIEWED:
Nancy Shor, Exec. Director

The process of grassroots organization involves several steps.
1. FLEXIBILITY: A constantly shifting target.
   A. The ability to react on very short notice to sudden changes in the legislative environment.
   B. Allocation of five to ten percent of staff time until issues suddenly come to the surface and, as a result, the staff reacts with a very intense level of activity until the issue has been resolved.
   C. Communicating with members is done through newsletters and the website.

2. COMMUNICATIONS with members.
   A. Emails: Broadcast emails are cheap but their effectiveness is greatly reduced and many people have become very blasé about receiving those messages.
      i. The words “Alert” “Bulletin” are used.
      ii. Broadcast faxes are still a very effective way to communicate with members.
   B. When communicating with members:
      i. Have a very short, clear description of what the issue is.
      ii. Attempt to be very specific as to what they are being asked to do and...
      ii. Make it as easy as possible to take action.

3. ACTIVE MEMBERS.
   A. Hard core members are the ones who really want to do something.
   B. They will send letters.
      i. It is not usually good to use form letters
      ii. Use a member’s letter, share it among the people on the list and ask them to make changes to personalize.
   C. Include in all correspondence anecdotes of one or two real people in real situations.
   D. Use letterhead. When faxing, use your letterhead to indicate who you are.
   E. Attempt to have other organizations support your position
      i. Obtain a letter indicating that there is a third-party interest in the issue.
      ii. Send third part letters along.

4. DEALING W/ELECTED OFFICIALS:
   A. Each congressional office will have two piles of mail.
      i. Pile No. 1 comes from their district and is addressed immediately.
      ii. Pile No. 2 is everybody else and all other mail goes into that pile, usually being ignored.
   B. What can we do to really help you is the question to be asking members of the House of Representatives.
      i. Attempt to have that conversation with a staff member during a phone call.
ii. Get ahold of the Congressional Yellow Book. It has all the fax numbers, phone numbers, names of all the staff numbers.

C. Be cognizant of the fact that there are usually two representatives that are affected by an individual. One is for their home address and one is for their office address.

5. FREQUENCY OF CONTACT W/MEMBERS
   A. Do not go to your members too often.
   B. Do not overdue crisis communications.

6. LOBBYISTS:
   A. The function of the lobbyist is to help you understand the system and work within the system.
   B. Breakfast fundraisers held by a lobbyist are an effective way of having all the lobbyist’s clients come together and have their opportunity to discuss their issues in front of the particular member of the House of Representatives.
   C. It is also a very effective way for a group of like-minded associations to get together and have access to a member of the House.
   D. Do not have your current members call the lobbyist direct.

8. ORGANIZATIONS:
   A. Allied organizations, organizations that can provide a third-party endorsement of your position, are very, very effective. There is strength in numbers.
   B. These relationships cannot be done at the last minute, these have to be nurtured over an extended period of time and when it is appropriate, ask for help.
   C. Look for other associations and groups that have a common interest with regards to our organization.

9. Always look for non-profits as a way to associate yourself with other organizations and to be able to support each other with each other’s particular issues.

Interviewed by Mick McGuire
Appendix 2:
Report on Capwiz Capabilities and Possible Upgrades

Software Capability Desired:

1. Identify, tag or otherwise assimilate in a database, our members to be involved in this effort (by Congressional district, etc.)

Can our current service do this? **NO**

Does Capwiz have a product that can? Yes, there is a Mailing List upgrade to the basic Capwiz service that we currently purchase.

**Mailing List** can:

- Allow for detailed databases of NAELA membership
- Sort based on criteria in the database, i.e. Congressional district, Grassstps contacts, etc
- Send emails, action alerts, etc to members with NAELA letterhead/graphics
- Allow for mail merges to personalize messages to members
- Can store up to 100,000 members’ information (Capwiz will import member information free for the first 20,000 members and 6 cents per member after the initial 20,000).

**Cost and Terms:** $2,000 extra annually (Current Capwiz product costs $4,000/year)

2. Associate our members with the legislators and staff personnel related to that member or other important advocacy targets

Can our current service do this? **NO**

Does Capwiz have a product that can? See **Mailing List**. Caveat: The Capwiz product connects the NAELA membership with legislators by emailing messages to legislators’ offices, but does not provide staffer contact information for those legislators.

3. Target/touch our members on a regular and crisis basis with information and communications related to advocacy positions

Can our current service do this? **NO**, with our current service, action alerts and other messages can only be seen if the member logs into the NAELA government affairs page on the website.

Does Capwiz have a product that can? This would be greatly assisted by **Mailing List**. With mailing list, NAELA could email the membership with action alerts, talking points, general info, etc. Since it can be set up to use our letterhead and graphics, it will appear as if the email is coming from NAELA rather than Capwiz.
4. Inform/instruct our members how to build and update their own data base of clients and referral sources to assist in the advocacy effort.

Can our current service do this? **NO**

Does *Capwiz* have a product that can? With *Mailing List*, NAELA can email the membership with information regarding setting up databases. *Capwiz* cannot import or maintain individual members’ client databases, but with Mailing List, when NAELA sends emails to the membership, we can include links to certain pages on our *Capwiz* site that can be viewed without entering password information (i.e. could be viewed by non-NAELA members or members’ clients). Thus, NAELA members would have to maintain their own client databases and transmit information to the individuals in those databases by forwarding emails sent by *Mailing List* that could contain action alerts, talking points, and/or links to our *Capwiz* site.

5. Enable members to easily transmit advocacy information to the folks in their data base and vice versa; members should be able to use advocacy info in their practice (newsletters, etc.) and should be able to upload or get information to our grassroots targets easily and effectively. This element in particular will have several levels and some of this is already provided, for example getting letters out to congress on particular issues.

Can our current service do this? **YES, with limitations.** *Capwiz* provides web “stickers” which are links that members can put on their own websites to link up with advocacy materials and action alerts.

Does *Capwiz* have a product that can? (See #4 Above. Since *Capwiz* cannot keep NAELA member databases in house, we could not send advocacy information to the individuals in those databases *through the Capwiz system*. Members would have to email the individuals in their databases directly, and this could be done by forwarding emails sent by NAELA on to their clients.

6. Track and measure effectiveness of overall program from both the NAELA and member’s perspective. Again this element will have several levels. Numeric tracking by send, receive as well as surveys of how well program is helping in practices would be a minimum.

Can our current service do this? **YES, with some limitations.** We can currently view statistics about how many members have logged in, sent letters to legislators, dates they sent letters, etc.

Does *Capwiz* have a product that can? With *Mailing List*, we can also run queries through *Capwiz* that will allow us to generate a list of the members who have not taken action (with the current system, we can only monitor members who have logged into the *Capwiz* program to take action).
Mailing list can also allow us to create surveys to send to the membership that are very simple, (i.e. with questions about the effectiveness of our advocacy efforts and corresponding boxes to check) which will send the survey response information directly to the Capwiz. This is useful so that the member can simply open an email, click a link, check boxes, and click send.

7. Educate/market/train our members to inform them of benefit of system beyond the impact of advocacy; there needs to be some way to alert the membership about how to link, purchase, lease or otherwise hook into a program or database that will help them "touch" their clients and referral sources on a regular basis.

Can our current service do this? **NO**
Does Capwiz have a product that can? Since NAELA provides all the content that goes into the Capwiz system, this is simply a question of communicating that content. With Mailing List, NAELA could email members tailored messages about how to utilize the Capwiz system. As mentioned above, with Mailing List, NAELA members can easily forward messages they receive to the clients and referral sources in their databases.

8. Get feedback as quickly as possible back to the membership on their advocacy efforts.

Can our current service do this? **NO**
Does Capwiz have a product that can? With Mailing List, we can email members quickly and include statistical queries regarding levels of participation.

**NOTE ON STATE LEGISLATION:** Our current version of Capwiz only allows NAELA to track federal legislation and target federal legislators. Capwiz does have an upgrade that would allow NAELA to track state legislation and target state legislators in essentially the same way that the federal system works. Cost of upgrade: An additional $6,000 annually.