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**5 Successful Local Government
Affairs Strategies & How You
Can Implement Them Now**

Local Government Affairs Strategies from the Pros

Local governments are becoming the new battleground for controversial policy and regulations, according to industry professionals at a recent Curate webinar, [Lessons Learned: Real-Life Local Government Affairs Success Strategies & How to Copy Them.](#)

At the virtual event, Patrick Crowley, vice president of governmental affairs at the Greater Cincinnati Northern Kentucky Apartment Association; Erin Smist, government affairs manager at Suburban Realtors Alliance; and Tammie Hetrick, president and CEO at the Washington Food Industry Association; shared the challenges and opportunities of local monitoring and advocacy, as well as their most effective strategies for keeping up with policy change at the local level.

Read on to get the highlights of the conversation and the top five most effective strategies the pros shared that you can put into practice now!



Strategy 1:

Monitor Discussions, Not Agendas

Monitoring city and county government meeting agendas can help you stay informed about public hearings and votes. However, since it's typical for local governments to provide the minimum legally required amount of notice for meetings and votes, monitoring agendas alone will often leave you less than a week to prepare a campaign.

To get a heads up on what proposals might be coming down the line, Hetrick says it's best to also monitor the discussions included in the meeting minutes.

“If somebody testifies during a hearing and a key term comes up, like ‘hazard pay,’ we’re getting a notice,” Hetrick said, referring to her organization’s use of local legislative tracking software Curate to monitor agendas and minutes for any advocacy topics.



Smart Topic Filters

Curate scans hundreds of thousands of agendas and minutes each week and identifies all mentions of customers’ topics — looking for dozens of variations of phrases. Then, using a combination of Deep Learning and Natural Language Processing technologies, the software determines the relevance of each hit based on its context. The algorithm is trained on a data set that is constantly being refined by a team of human experts. This ensures the alerts delivered to customers’ inboxes are relevant and comprehensive.

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Strategy 2: Get Ahead of Local Trends

Another way to get ahead of harmful ordinances before they land on the agenda in your area is to identify trends as they move through neighboring regions. Crowley says he often sees ideas spread from one municipality or county to another quickly, with some communities preemptively passing ordinances simply because a nearby municipality did.

“We were able to see this trend over the days and weeks and months of following [the topic in] Curate. The municipalities are starting to put regulations in, and now it’s just resulted in some state legislation as well,” he said.

Crowley also noted that if national news media start to cover a controversial issue that casts your industry in a negative light, it’s likely that local media will soon cover the same story. A smart practice is to proactively distribute media talking points to your advocates in case they get interviewed.

12,000+ Communities

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Strategy 3:

Build Local Relationships

Effective local advocacy requires strong relationships with local elected officials, staff members, and influential community members. To build and maintain relationships, it's helpful to position yourself as a collaborator working to improve policy, instead of a roadblock to change. When a harmful ordinance is likely to pass in a community, look for ways to mitigate the harm instead of opposing the whole ordinance. Additionally, when a decision-making body is split on an issue, focus on equipping the elected officials who are already sympathetic to your cause with the information and resources to help them advocate for you.

“We’ve had some success with talking to specific members of a council that are favorable to our perspective, and that’s really helped us to chip away at an issue,” said Smist.

Local Hub

The Local Hub tab in Curate provides a searchable database of the contact information of more than 168,000 elected officials and staff.

[Learn More](#)



Strategy 4: Empower & Engage Your Advocates

Local elected officials often rely on subject matter experts in their community to help them make decisions. To position your members or employees as the local experts, make introductions between local officials and local representatives of your organization — and keep your supporters informed about local policy issues and talking points with a weekly policy roundup. Hetrick’s team at the Washington Food Industry Association uses this approach.

“Those council members now know who their subject matter experts are who are in the field working on this stuff,” she said.



Favorites & Folders

The favorites feature in Curate lets you tag a hit as a “favorite” and organize them into folders. Many advocacy teams use this feature to add items to a “Weekly Update Email” folder throughout the week and then refer to those items when putting together legislative updates for anyone they report to (members, policy committees, or other stakeholders).

[Learn More](#)

Strategy 5: Get Ahead of Local Trends

Local policy changes are typically introduced in response to a specific problem. But local officials understand that sometimes the cure is worse than the disease. You'll have more success opposing a proposal if you can build a diverse coalition and focus your message around the overall impact of the proposal on the community as a whole.

If you can get enough stakeholders to say something will negatively impact them, the downsides of the proposal may start to outweigh the potential upsides.

“Whatever the issue is, make sure that you're looking beyond just how it impacts your membership, but also at how it's going to impact that entire community and make sure that's in your messaging,” Hetrick says.

Research Tab

From the Research Tab, Curate users can access a searchable database of all the documents Curate has collected for the geographical region included in their account — going back several years in most areas. This feature makes it easy to find out how issues have been handled in other communities, along with who supported and opposed them.

[Learn More](#)

Put These Strategies in Place With the Help of Local Policy Monitoring Software

Successful local government affairs professionals are leaning on local policy monitoring software to help identify and respond to the most urgent policy issues in local government — without the hassle of finding and reading thousands of agendas and minutes each week.

See how Curate can help you keep up with what's happening in the local governments in your area.

[Schedule a Demo](#)



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