



It Takes a Coalition to Change Tobacco Policy in Louisiana

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My involvement in a coalition

- I received a multi-year grant in 2000 from the Louisiana Board of Regents to study tobacco use among college students.
- Partnered with Southern University (HBCU) for seven years.
- Joined the coalition via invitation in 2001.
- Received grants from Louisiana Campaign for Tobacco-Free Living until 2014, which required membership in the Healthy Communities Coalition
- Recently assisted with Breath-Free Louisiana campaign.

'Coalition' Definitions

- A coalition is a group of individuals and/or organizations with a common interest who agree to work together toward a common goal, such as passing tobacco policy/law.
- An organization of organizations or a group of groups that come together to collaborate such as to achieve health or public policy outcomes.
- The similar terms “alliances,” “networks,” and “partnerships” are also used when two or more organizations come together to operate for mutual benefit, such as supporting group members’ individual events or efforts.

Common Characteristics of Coalitions

- Members act as a group.
- They are formed for a specific purpose.
- They contain a group of interacting individuals.
- They are independent from the organization's formal structure.
- They have no formal structure.
- They are oriented to a specific issue to advance the group's purpose.
- Perception of membership is mutual among members.
- They have an external focus.

Different Coalition Perspectives:

- In a business setting, the goal of a coalition may be to seek power and distribute resources.
- Political science and social psychology perspectives are based on game theory and focus on government formation.
 - Caplow's (1956) model
 - Gamson's (1961) minimum resource theory
 - Komorita and Chertkoff's (1973) bargaining theory
 - Axelrod's (1970), Leiserson's (1966) and Rosenthal's (1970) models predict which groups are most likely to form a coalition.
- **Community coalitions built around a pressing community problem.**

Riker's Size Theory of Political Coalitions

Riker's (1962) size theory of political coalitions was the first formal model of coalition behavior in political science built on these assumptions:

- 1) Actors are rational in that they prefer winning to losing;
- 2) The game is zero sum;
- 3) Players have perfect information in that they know every possible move that any player can make;
- 4) Side payments are allowed (coalition members can divide their mutual payoff);
- 5) Winning coalitions are the only entities that have value;
- 6) Members of the winning coalition receive positive payoffs; and
- 7) Coalitions have the ability to add or drop members.

Coalition Formation

- Coalitions can form at the governmental level (Britain political parties)
- At the national level, such as MomsRising (paid family leave), Mayors Against Illegal Guns and the Progressive Turnout Project (progressive voter turnout).
- At the state level (Colorado Cannabis Coalition; **Louisiana Campaign for Tobacco-Free Living – Health and Hospitals**)
- At the regional or local level (**Health Communities Coalition**)

The National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (MADD)

The NHTSA, which encourages the formation of local Mothers Against Drunk Driving groups, provides these community coalition-building guidelines:

1. Search the landscape
2. Brainstorm ideas on potential participants
3. Determine staffing, budget, and resources
4. Invite people to join
5. Clarify expectations
6. *Do not assume everyone understands the issue*
7. Develop a mission statement
8. Define goals and objectives

Maintaining a Coalition (NHTSA)

1. Celebrate victories.
2. Recognition of good work will go a long way, particularly when times get tough and the successes harder to achieve.
3. Demonstrate what people can do and what's in it for them.
4. Manage resources effectively to avoid having the coordinator do all the work.
5. Allow time for buy-in to insure the group maintains interest and stays involved.
6. Choose a strong leader to maintain focus.
7. Provide training for contact with the media.
8. Provide sufficient funding.
9. Keep moving forward despite the unwillingness of key groups to become involved.

Louisiana Health Communities Coalition (Originally, The Cancer Coalition)

- The Louisiana Campaign for Tobacco-Free Living (Division of Public Health) with 9 regions. This coalition is in Region 2.
- The American Cancer Society (Baton Rouge chapter)
- Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center
- Several other medical, academic and non-profit groups which have changed over time.
- Founded originally to promote better cancer diagnoses and care, but with a special emphasis on tobacco-related cancer issues.

Coalition Accomplishments

- 2005-2006 Passed local smoke-free air ordinances
- 2007 State Smoke-Free Air Act went into effect (omitting bars, casinos, college campuses)
- 2011-2015 Tried and failed twice to raise the state tobacco sales tax before finally succeeding in 2015 (compromise).
- 2013-2014 Passed Act 211 requiring public college campuses to develop smoke-free or tobacco-free policies
- 2014-2015 Supported city ordinances that prohibits smoking in bars and gaming establishments (Lacks enforcement provision).
- 2016-? Passed East Baton Rouge Parish ordinance (2017) and now working on including a prohibition on smoking in bars and gaming establishments in the Smoke-Free Air Act.

Coalition Failures

- Dwindling Resources (grants, advertising)
- Less interest from American Cancer Society (and from lobbyist)
- Loss of energy, creativity as individuals moved on to jobs with other agencies.
- Change in focus to obesity, an area that current members had little interest or expertise in and competing coalitions that had the interest and expertise.
- Difficulty in maintain member interest and attracting new members.
- Not enough assessment or accountability.

Lessons Learned

- Patience is the best virtue.
- Meeting location matters.
- Membership matters (and ability to joining with other coalitions)
- Strong leadership is necessary.
- Focus is essential.
- Assessment is difficult but vitally important for long-term maintenance.
- Planning for the future is critical.
- Recognition and celebrations are rewarding.
- The coalition needs to stay updated on the political scene.
- Bring in speakers and outside trainers to help organize and move forward.

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The Community Tool Box is a service of the Work Group for Community Health and Development at the University of Kansas, 2015.

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