

Lutheran Services in America 2008 Annual Conference

Why Advocacy Is Important

April 25, 2008

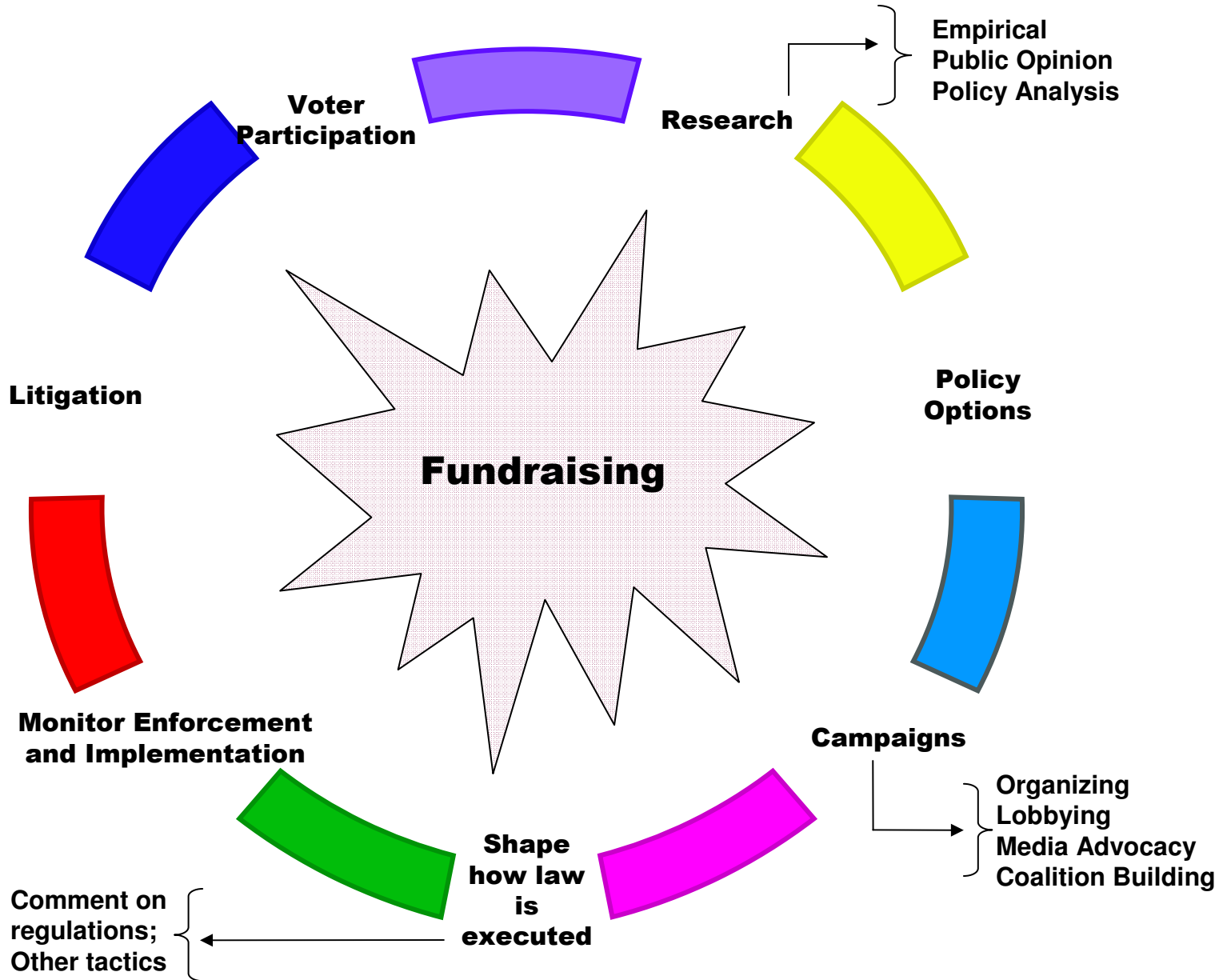
Gary D. Bass



“When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a communist.”

Helder Camara, Archbishop of Olinda and Recife, Brazil (1909-1999)

The Nonprofit Advocacy Cycle

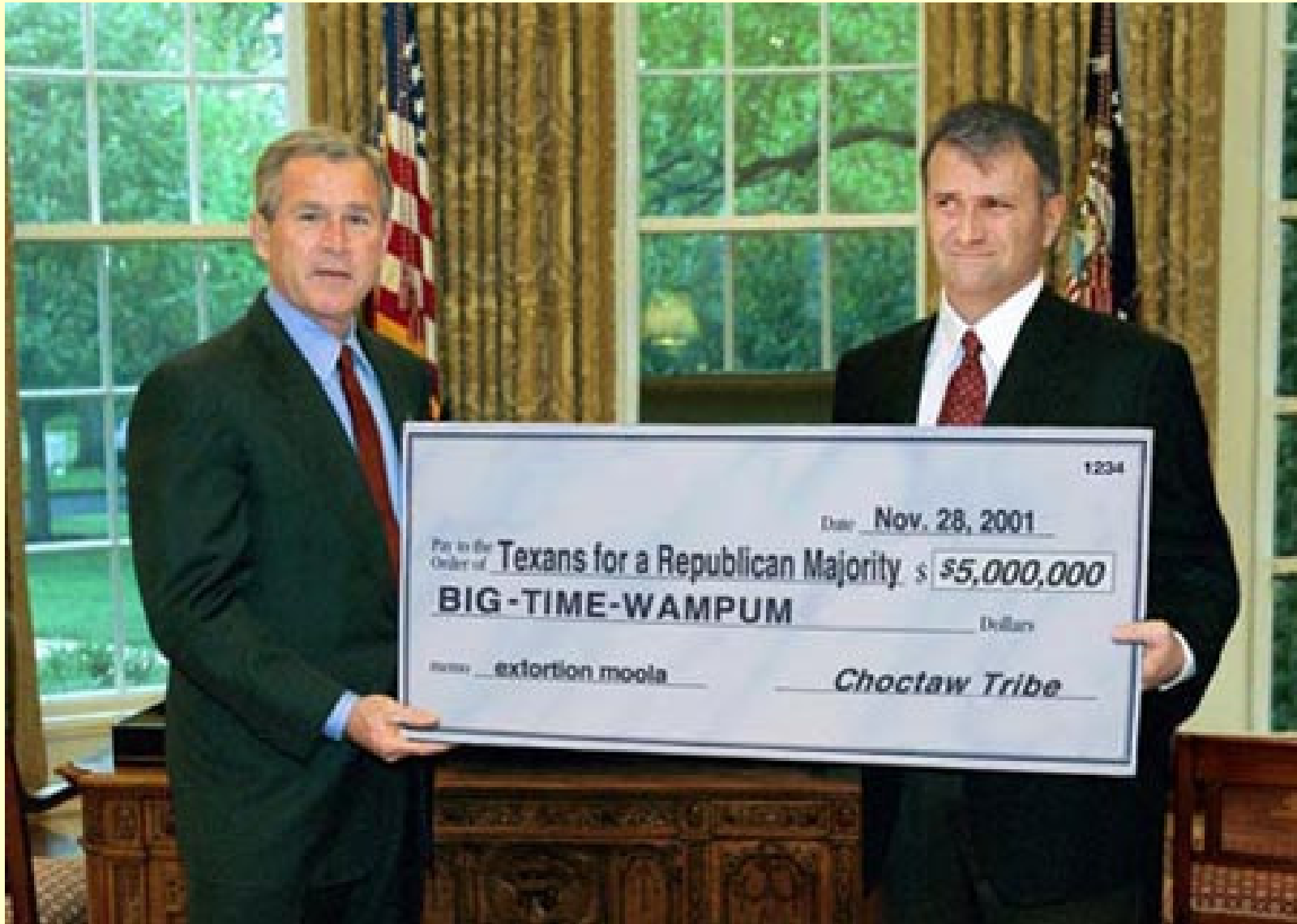


Developed by Gary D. Bass, OMB Watch

The 1st Amendment

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; *or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.*

Meet Jack Abramoff, convicted lobbyist



The Big Picture...

Charities say that lobbying and public policy participation is a core part of their mission....

But frequency is very low



Implications

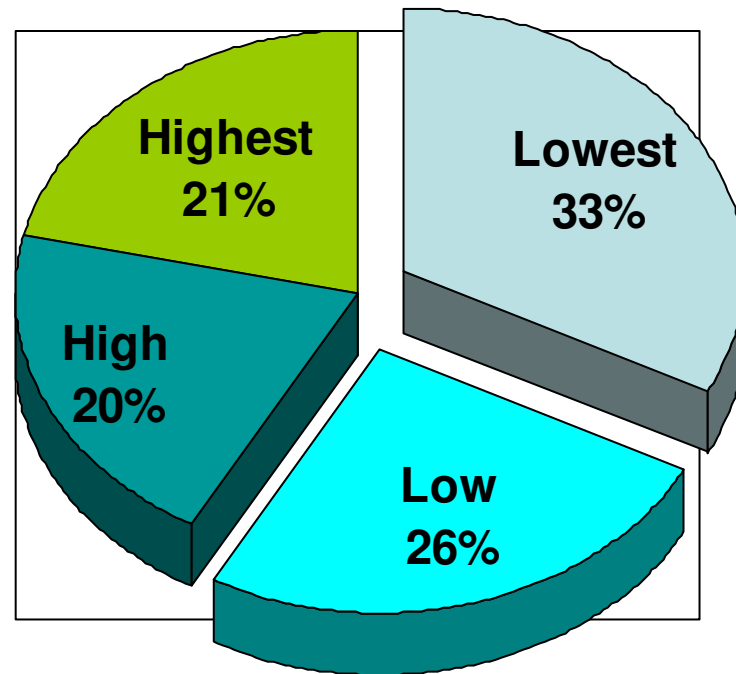
- Lobbying is largely defensive and sporadic
- Nonprofits don't know lobbying can help achieve long term solutions

Policy Participation

Most Groups that Lobby Do Not Make it a Priority

- 3 of 5 respondents that lobby say they do so at a low level.
- A majority (33%) of low level lobbyists do it at the lowest level available on the survey.

Lobbying Frequency



A Maze of Tax Rules (NOT Lawyers) are Barriers



**Beyond limited resources,
lobbying rules are the greatest
barrier to participation**

- *Half of nonprofits did not know they could lobby even if part of their budget comes from federal funds*
- 43% incorrectly thought they could not sponsor a forum or debate featuring candidates for office
- *More than 25% did not know they could support or oppose federal legislation*
- More than 20% did not know they can support or oppose federal regulations

The Key is Motivation



Even if barriers were resolved it would not lead to more participation... without a reason to engage

- 86% of nonprofits said supporting the organization's mission was top reason to participate in policy
- *Implication:* Help groups understand the link between mission and government policy

You Can Shift the Wind



Lobbying is legal

We have a moral responsibility to lobby

We must get others involved

Lessons for Nonprofit Leaders

- **The organization's leadership must embrace advocacy or it will wither. This includes board commitment.**
- **The executive director should not have day-to-day responsibility for public policy.**
- **Groups that belong to associations that represent them before government are more likely to participate.**
- **Ask and you shall receive: when contacted 4 or more times per month, 78% of groups take 2 or more actions per month.**