**Chapter 6: Engaging in Macro Policy Advocacy**

***Policy Advocacy Learning Challenges and Exercises***

***Excerpted from the book***

**POLICY ADVOCACY LEARNING CHALLENGE 6.1**

**Identifying Advocacy Groups**

Examine the following list of advocacy groups in the gerontology sector. Go to the websites of three of these groups. Identify their general perspectives. Are they relatively liberal, relatively conservative, or relatively “neutral” in their orientation? How would you estimate their likely power or influence—or is that impossible to determine from their website? Were you desirous of improving policies for senior citizens, might you consider getting feedback from a staff member of one or more of these groups? Now go to be web to find advocacy groups for a specific issue such as gun control, women’s reproductive rights, or immigration rights.

**Table 6.1** Some Advocacy Groups Seeking Greater Social Justice in the Gerontology Sector

1. [AFL-CIO](http://www.aflcio.org/)

2. [Alliance for Retired Persons](http://retiredamericans.org/)

3. [American Association of Retired Persons](http://www.aarp.org/)

4. [Center for Economic and Policy Research](http://www.cepr.net/)

5. [Century Foundation](http://www.tcf.org/): Social Security Network

6. [Institute for America’s Future](http://ourfuture.org/institute)

7. [National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare](http://www.ncpssm.org/)

8. New York Network for Action on Medicare and Social Security

**POLICY ADVOCACY LEARNING CHALLENGE 6.2**

**Analyzing the Ideology and Compromise**

Take any major controversial policy proposal currently under consideration by a local, state, or federal legislature. Identify what their most ardent advocates would want, no matter their ideology, whether liberal or conservative. Then identify some concessions these advocates might consider supporting to make it more likely that it would be enacted. *Hint:* Take examples like national immigration reform, enactment of specific policies to decrease economic inequality, proposals to limit gun ownership, proposals to decriminalize drugs like marijuana, proposals to allow people with severe illnesses to legally receiving assistance to end their lives—or any other policy initiative with which you are familiar.

Discuss why policy advocates favor these policies. Discuss how they are likely to encounter people with divergent positions. See if you can identify some concessions these policy advocates might need to make to get their policies adopted.

**POLICY ADVOCACY LEARNING CHALLENGE 6.3**

**Getting to the Truth**

Go online to see if the following assertions, which are often made in the public arena, are true:

1. Few users of safety-net programs work, including those who use SNAP and Medicaid
2. Increases in Medicaid or welfare programs in one state will attract low-income people from another state to emigrate to it
3. Tax increases for millionaires will cut the nation’s economic growth

Select any other assertion made by a public figure and inquire whether research has shown it to be true.

**POLICY ADVOCACY LEARNING CHALLENGE 6.4**

**Identifying and Using Cultural Symbols**

Take a stab at identifying cultural symbols that might prove adverse to securing support for a legislative measure, particularly with relatively conservative legislators. Might President Barack Obama have considered a different title for the Affordable Care Act to enhance support for it among conservatives, and, if so, what might a better title have been?

**POLICY ADVOCACY LEARNING CHALLENGE 6.5**

**Key Skills and Personal Assets**

Identify some of the skills needed by macro policy advocates in the preceding discussion—but also identify some additional skills *not* discussed in the preceding pages. Discuss which of these skills you think you possess—and which you would like to further enhance.

Read the vignette in Policy Advocacy Learning Challenge 6.2 to identify key skills needed by macro policy advocates like social worker Melissa Bird, who successfully persuaded members of the legislature of the State of Utah to enact a specific piece of legislation. What specific policy advocacy skills did Melissa Bird use? What attributes does she possess that contributed to her success in enacting legislative proposals?

Can you imagine becoming a macro policy advocate for an issue that interests you, whether as someone like Melissa Bird or in some other capacity, such as working on a political campaign or helping an advocacy group?