

New Mexicans for Money Out of Politics (NM MOP)

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General Meeting and AP Follow-up Training #3 of 3, May 9, 2017

6:15 at the LaFarge library

Rebecca Alvarez opened the meeting by asking for introductions by new members. Greg Sonnenfeld from Wolf-Pac was born in Las Cruces and has contacts there. There were also Christine and another student from NM Highlands University, Jeff Martinez. Jeff and Miguel Burns joined us by Skype.

Mitch Buszek reported on legislative news.

The biggest item was the Ethics Commission. If it passes both houses it will go on the ballot for the next election, bypassing the Governor.

A questionnaire is being prepared for the membership of NMMOP. What did you do during the legislative session? What legislators did you have contact with? What committees did you monitor? Would you do research to find common ground with a legislator? Would you do research on some of the 2018 candidates? Would you be willing to participate again?

There is a special session of the legislature coming up but NMMOP will not be involved. Before the special session, there is a court case—Peter Wirth is suing Governor Martinez for cutting higher education funding and the legislative budget.

David Burling went to look at the Federal Campaign Act and the Citizens United decision and found them very confusing.

Ben from American Promise joined us by Skype. He first asked for an update on our lobbying groups.

Mitch's group has a meeting with Ben Ray Lujan staffer Nick Maestas on May 10th. The group needs talking points and the opposition points. Ben will email those. The group has assigned roles and topics.

Ben said that the best way to have good meetings is to rehearse. The more rehearsals, the better it goes.

Bruce Berlin and Jeff Clements are doing a meeting with Ben Ray Lujan in Washington, DC tomorrow, May 10.

Debra Helper, whose group who will be working with Tom Udall, has reached out to Udall's people by filling out a request online and has received a reply, but not a meeting date. Udall wants to know what places in NM are represented in NMMOP. The group is planning to write their own scripts. The People's Rights Amendment is the follow up to Democracy for all Resolution. The group needs opposition arguments.

Ben said that legislators are overwhelmed since the election and that killing them with kindness will work for us.

David Burling reported on the Grisham group. They are working on roles and rehearsals. They need details which are not on the American Promise website, but they are on connect.americanpromise.net which is open to anyone who has ever donated to American Promise. Ben has also sent resources to Ishwari but they haven't reached the group yet. Grisham is trying to keep 501(c)4 entities from political lobbying.

The Heinrich group has tried twice (once by phone once online) to set up a meeting and will keep trying. Ben has some strategies.

Miguel asked, "how is New Mexico different politically and in terms of personality?"

Ben answered by saying that showing vulnerability works well. Tap into their humanity. People often shy away from that with politicians.

Ben's strategies for getting responses from legislators.

- a) Ask your state legislator to get you a meeting with your Congressperson—make sure you are a constituent.
- b) Persistence—keep asking without being annoying.
- c) Write a letter to the editor of a newspaper thanking the congressperson for something they've done in the past and say that you are really looking forward to meeting them on this other important issue.

ALWAYS WITH KINDNESS. NO huffing and puffing.

Mitch said that for an in depth conversation, call Washington, DC because not only are there more staffers, but there are staffers assigned to individual issues.

Rebecca who has already met Wirth will approach him.

POSITIVE ATTITUDE

- d) Meet with state legislator first on the issue and then ask for a meeting with US Representative or Senator.
- e) Develop relationship with gatekeeper
- f) Debra said that they all have their own preferred ways to be approached, calls, emails, personal notes. Ask their office.
- g) Follow-up phone calls are key!
- h) Get the secretary to feel sympathy for your position.
- i) From the Staffer Town Hall on May 3, Call DC because there are more staff there and you can set up local meetings with staff via the DC staff.

Ben said that this will take time. Approach this work with humor, joy and celebration. There will be bumps in the road.

We then did a very quick role play of a meeting with a member of Congress. Ben said even in New Mexico we did not need a native, all they are interested in are constituents.

The values:

Values have to be clearly connected to our issues.
Pick a specific person or incident.
Make ourselves more vulnerable.

They will remember the personal better.

The ask:

Be sure to ask the legislator what they think about it before the ask.
Make them feel comfortable in asking for the reach across the aisle. "If you can get a Republican, you'll be the hero. We cannot win with only Democrats. Emphasize that this could end their fundraising.

Do research.

We will meet for the fourth training in another two weeks depending on when the library is available.

Ben ended with a quote from Rusty Schweickart:

"We're not passengers on Spaceship Earth, we're the crew. We aren't residents on this planet, we're citizens. The difference...is responsibility."