

Media Coverage of Public Policy Issues in Illinois:

A Survey of Media and Non-Profit Organizations

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Executive Summary

A survey of media outlets and organizations focused on public policy work in Illinois yielded a detailed snapshot of media coverage of public policy issues in the state. The picture looked at:

- Current trends of media coverage
- Trends in the 21st century
- Steps that media and organizations could take to improve coverage of public policy issues

Media reporters and editors provided a candid appraisal of the work of the media generally and specifically with their outlets on public policy issues. In turn, organizations presented their own appraisal of the media's work and their own efforts.

Both groups took a critical look at the overall picture and offered an appraisal of strengths and areas for improvement. Details of the appraisal in a quantitative and qualitative assessment are presented in this report.

The media revealed that a primary reason for doing policy issues stories is the perceived audience value in addition to timeliness of the issue and perceived impact on local communities. The media also confirmed that coverage depends on good information and access to the human faces of the issue.

Organizations revealed that they too understand the value of solid information and the human faces being available to develop coverage of a public policy issue. Their view was more skeptical and perhaps cynical of the media's intentions and abilities to cover a story like they believe it could be covered.

Both parties felt resources played a role and would like to see more training, person power and the elusive time available to do a better job on covering issues.

The report also contains three recommendations each for the media and organizations to improve coverage of public policy issues.

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Introduction: Doug Dobmeyer, as part of a fellowship from the Center for Urban Research and Learning at Loyola University of Chicago a survey was conducted of media and organizations in Illinois concerning media coverage of public policy issues. The following are the results of that survey and other research on the issue.

A survey of ten questions on media coverage of public policy issues was developed for media representatives. A similar survey was developed for organizations that work on public policy related issues in Illinois. Questions either asked for a prioritizing of responses from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest) or a narrative response (see survey questions at the end of the report).

The surveys were sent to subscribers to *Poverty Issues . . . Dateline Illinois* and media that receive the publication. Both of these lists represent a strong representation of media, for-profit and non-profit organizations, government and politicians and activist individuals who are involved in covering or developing public policy. issues. Overall responses totaled 16 from media representatives and eight from non-profit organizations. Percentages were calculated by grouping the lower priority (1-3) and the higher priority (4-5) answers on the total responding to each section of a question. Percentages were rounded to whole numbers.

Nine of the 16 media responses said their answers could not be attributed. The others asked the specific comments not be attributed. The preponderance of the responses were from print media with the balance being radio outlets. Ten print outlets responded, several with multiple responses of different reporters or editors. The responses included the *Chicago Tribune*, *Daily Herald*, *Illinois Issues* and *Crain's* State House bureaus were represented among the respondents. All of the respondents were experienced reporters or editors.

Of the eight organizations responding, half did not want their comments attributed. The respondents all represented media experienced groups from CEO or senior staff level people. The organizations were all Chicago-based but all had strong statewide and local media experience.

The survey offers a vivid snapshot on the issue of media coverage of public policy issues. The report should not be seen as criticism, but rather a work in progress. The recommendations offered for the media and organizations in the report are intended to improve media coverage of public policy issues by the media. Recommendations are offered for both the media and those organizations working on public policy issues.

Results of the Survey with Media Representatives

Decisions on covering an issue: Media responses provided for some strong insights into the decision making on specific stories. Almost all (91 percent) of the outlets responding said

perceived audience value was the most important reason for covering a public policy issue. Timeliness of the issue coverage followed closely with 85 percent of reporters and editors citing it as a factor deciding coverage media coverage. Interest to audiences and perceived impact on communities was cited by half of those responding as an important factor in the coverage decision.

Other factors that influenced coverage decisions were priorities in this order: access to information/sources, space, cost of reporting a story and understanding the issue.

Also cited were uniqueness, the ability to have an exclusive, the availability of quantitative data, the presence of prominent individuals or the dollar impact of the story.

One reporter said the bottom line is, "Is it a news story with a real impact?"

Media coverage of public policy issues: Media respondents were not shy in saying their media outlets were prepared to cover public policy issues. A solid majority of 77 percent said their outlet was prepared. One person thought their outlet was partially prepared. However, when it came to judging other outlets, 58 percent thought media in general could do a better job. Given that the media responding were experienced reporters, the view of the media in general can be seen as more objective than pure boosterism for their outlet. Several reporters cited that more of a budget and more reporters would boost the ability to cover public policy issues.

Reporters and editors are concerned about the focus on public policy issues in state capitols such as Springfield. A number of respondents related that state issues are often seen as very dry and boring. This perception is a major barrier to increasing coverage of public policy issues.

Cornelia Grumman, State Government reporter for the *Chicago Tribune* said, "One of the biggest concerns I have is that media outlets in Chicago—like a lot of residents of the urban area—don't think about Springfield as a place that can have a real impact on the city. It's a throwback to the old days when Chicago politicians went down to Springfield and told them how things would be."

Peggy Boyer-Long, editor of the public interest monthly magazine, *Illinois Issues* said, "Publishers of commercial media are less interested in paying for government reporting, especially at the state level."

Sources for covering public policy issues: The reporters responding emphasized every story reported on will have different characteristics, angles and the need for different sources.

At least half of the media respondents ranked the following sources as the most important on public policy issues in this order: people affected, politicians, non and for-profit businesses, and government bureaucrats.

Expert sources able to give accurate, key information are especially desirable.

What prevents a story from being done: Front line media respondents offered a treasure trove of reasons why issues don't get covered. The following list paints a picture of the diversity of barriers to effective coverage of public policy issues. Time to do the reporting and timeliness of the issue was mentioned the most often.

- Time to cover, investigate, and competing priorities
- Issue has no local angle
- Story too narrow, affects only a small number of people
- Editors' decisions
- Complexity of the issue and translating that into a story
- Not interesting
- Relevance to readers
- Chance of zero story after lots of work
- Timeliness in reaching the right sources, getting the information
- Finding real people affected by the policies
- Space
- Other events dominate that day
- Knowledge of the issue
- Not an "exclusive"
- No access to those who know/understand the matter to be reported
- Money
- Too much spin by people pushing story ideas
- Previous coverage by local or national media

Factors in reporting on policy issues: Reporters and editors provided a look at what makes a story go. Respondents cited the impact on people affected (67 percent) as the most important in deciding to cover an issue. Impact on the local media coverage area garnered 64 percent of the respondents citing it as a priority. Politics was cited by 57 percent as a key factor. Almost half (46 percent) saw the impact on the government unit's budget as a key factor.

Evaluation of budget issues for proposed and actual government actions: This issue brought a strong response from experienced reporters on the governmental scene.

Arsenio M. Oloroso, Jr., associate editor covering healthcare issues for *Crain's Chicago Business*, provided this recipe for successful media coverage of budget related issues, "Look at cost-benefit analysis, e.g., profitability of for-profit or not-for-profit participants, utility analysis, price-earnings multiples, debt service coverage and bond ratings, gross state product, employment rates, etc."

Eighty-two percent of the responding reporters said they include estimates of fiscal impact in their stories. Arriving at those estimates can tax a reporter's skills. One reporter with specialized training offered her approach.

Cornelia Grumman, covering state issues in Chicago for the *Chicago Tribune* said, "I try to look at the cost from various perspectives—i.e., as a percent of the total budget, on a cost-per-client

basis, how cost has changed over time, how it compares to the cost of other goods and services—then use the ones that would seem to fit the context of the story, supporting the point it's trying to get across, and also the ones that would best drive home the meaning to readers."

Two-thirds of the responding reporters said they had training in budget related matters. Sometimes that expertise relies on a well grounded reporter with sound instincts and experience. The following are two examples of a reporter's approach in Washington, D.C. and Springfield. Both reporters have reputations for well-regarded pieces from their respective beats.

Paul Merrion, *Crain's* Washington, D.C. bureau chief counseled, "use authoritative source, such as budget officials or issue experts."

Don Thompson, a long-time Springfield based reporter for the *Bloomington Pantagraph* and now the state government reporter for the Daily Herald said, "I generally talk to advocates, opponents and bureaucrats."

All four of these approaches demonstrate a reporter's dedication to digging out the facts and people to back up any statements. All four reporters operate in the rough and tumble world of State House and big-city politics.

There is no cookie cutter approach to providing specialized training for reporters. Respondents reported additional training and approaches:

- Reporting experience: Call on an expert, if available on an issue
- Some outlets have a wide variety of experts writing for them or guiding the reporting
- Another has strong academic training from Duke University and a Masters from Harvard in public policy issues
- Another relies on interviews with academics, advocates and bureaucrats
- Seminars on specific issues (i.e., Rural and environmental issues)
- Another outlet has reporters with subject-matter expertise obtained their beat seniority or previous industry experience

Sufficient resources to do reporting: Eighty percent of respondents said they had sufficient resources to do good reporting. Once again, time, was cited as a barrier to always doing the best reporting.

Improving media coverage: This question brought a very focused and strong response from reporters and editors. Some answers pointed to practical issues of better pay, more staff, education and writing skills. The depth of the following answers showed the depth of understanding by the reporters of their jobs and obligations to society to report accurately the issues.

- The issue of good coverage really comes down to communication abilities, drive, trust, timeliness, newsworthiness, facts, faces and presentation.
- More information on what actually is the case and less reporting on political aspects or "how it will play" with the public

- More independent outlets to Make sure key reporters are on your mailing list (and that they get it as soon as it comes out, not two weeks later through snail mail, in case they're intrigued by something newsworthy in the publication. E-mail or fax is best for this.)
- More attention paid to the policy, less to the politicians.
- Identify real people to talk to in their own environment to Avoid confusion between an issue, which has pro and con arguments, and a subject, which is much broader and unfocused, often to the point where you could write a book but not a story
- Access to front-line workers and those affected
- Find new way to report and chart
- Better education of the media on the issues and their consideration to real life problems of their readers/viewers
- Issue proponents should lower the hype and partisanship levels while providing more truthful positions to Improvements in the Freedom of Information Act
- More follow ups after the high-profile exposure of an issue
- Less sensationalism
- More stories focused on the people impacted by the policies.
- Good use of pictures
- Tips from sources on good and interesting stories. Reporters sometimes mistakenly discount a good story from a source if they've gotten lame or self-serving suggestions from that person in
- the past. Reporters are drawn to efficient sources of news.
- Make public policy issues more of a priority, more time and space
- On-line availability of more government databases
- More editors who love and understand basic government reporting
- Sources prepared with real individuals in each geographic region`

Cornelia Grumman of the *Chicago Tribune* offers these practical points of advice to non-profits and others who try to get more coverage of public policy issues in media should first spend a little time understanding what makes for a good story, and how to pitch it to a reporter. They have to understand that reporters can't be experts on everything, so the person pitching the story may have to do a little reporting themselves before trying to sell their idea.

First, there need to be a specific news angle for the story—i.e., the state stands to lose \$20 million in federal dollars for a certain worthwhile social program because it missed a deadline. Or another angle may be an anniversary overview of what's happening with the city's child insurance program, with particular emphasis on a few new developments.

Second, make a non-emotional argument why this is a worthwhile program, important event, interesting trend or serious problem

Third, quantify exactly what's at stake here, money-wise, personnel, or people affected. What will happen if the state doesn't get this money?

Fourth, who are the key players.

Fifth, If possible, help the reporter get in contact with people directly affected by the program or problem—or try to give suggestions on where they might go. Understand they may well (and probably should do their own digging, too)

Sixth, depending on the nature of the story, give the reporter enough time to work up something worthwhile. Don't spring this on them at 4 p.m. on a Friday and expect to see it in tomorrow's paper or tonight's newscast.

Seventh, the first question on every reporter's mind is going to be: why is this person pitching this? What's in it for him? What axe is he/she grinding? Best to just be up front about it, because if a reporter discovers this later in the course of reporting, he/she might become so turned off as to drop the story

Eighth, In general, it's best to work in a relationship of trust with reporters. Call them periodically to update them on what you're doing, and even upcoming events and conferences so they know what's going on and can follow them if they choose. But every phone call doesn't have to be a story pitch. Make sure they're on your mailing list (and that they get the publication as soon as it comes out, not two weeks later through snail mail, in case they're intrigued by something newsworthy in the publication. E-mail or fax is best for this.)

What's in store for the 21st Century: Media representatives were asked to provide insights on media coverage in the coming century. Given the new and enhanced communication tools, especially the Internet, the answers to this question provides intriguing possibilities.

- More direct provision of raw undigested primary source material, a la the Starr Report
- Quicker and easier access to information and opinions through the Internet
- As an increasing number of important public policy decisions are shifted from federal to state decision-making bodies, more state government reporters will be shouldering broader responsibility for covering these Issues. Often, these reporters have more expertise (and sometimes interest) in politics, than policy. The unfortunate burden, therefore, will rest with watchdog groups, agencies, non-profits and government types themselves to spend a little more time educating the media on the issues and getting them interested in trends, problems, events and other news stories
- Expansion of independent, progressive media committed to bringing about greater democracy, economic justice and environmental sustainability
- Less daily coverage and more in-depth reports by major media
- Computer-assisted reporting on trends that otherwise aren't apparent or provable
- Newspapers and magazines must become more sophisticated purveyors of information with more analysis and in-depth story telling.
- More public journalism initiatives
- More coverage on line and less in print
- Less coverage of substance, more hype
- Greater need for editors (or agents) to filter information for users
- Reporters doing more computer analyses of public policy issues
- More electronic garbage that the public confuses with credible journalism

- But not much change - No dollars are driving it and audience not prone or educated to care about politicians and politics
- More domination of think tank analysis, and less original analysis by the media
- Continued public apathy

Arsenio Oloroso of *Crain's Chicago Business* offers some closing comments from the media.

“One of the most salient things that I've learned as a now-veteran local journalist is how so-called unenfranchised groups are poorly positioned to gain media coverage. In their book *Media Power Politics*, David L. Paletz and Robert M. Entman said: "They are off reporters' beats and lack the resources to package any news they do make in a usable form for journalists. Their leaders have few if any 'exclusives' to offer the press and are often naive about the constraints and imperatives under which reporters operate."

“It's exactly those operational constraints and imperatives that need to be understood for any group to have the slightest chance of coverage. That and having something truly important to say." One thing is very clear from the media survey results: the coverage of news on public policy issues is ever-evolving. Perseverance by the media to report on issues that may have the appearances of being boring but affect so much of our lives is an essential element of the U.S. democracy.

Results of the Survey with Non-Profit Organizations

Non-profit organizations were sent a similar survey. The purpose was to document barriers and methods that helped produce good media coverage of public policy Issues

Decision making on pitching a story idea: Groups were asked about the basis for their pitch of a story to the media. The respondents are all from veterans of media work on public policy issues.

The primary reason (71 percent) given for pitching a story was the availability of solid information. Half of the respondents recognized media coverage has an impact on funding. Forty percent of those responding said they had the confidence to do the pitching.

Another factor cited in this process is the availability of staff or volunteers to do the media work. Several groups recognized the importance of timeliness.

The discussion on whether to pitch or not was presented in a very practical manner. It really came down to base of knowledge, resources, timing, confidence and funding considerations.

The major steps in presenting a story to the media brought intuitive responses that showed a strong practical application. The major steps suggested by the respondents based on their experiences included:

- Ascertain that the data is solid, do necessary research and organize the information in a useable way

- Develop a story line of interest
- Master the information
- Get very clear on objectives for getting coverage
- Research targeting of media and the best methods to present to the media
- Contact the media with an effective pitch
- Prepare report/analysis if feasible
- Obtain individual client stories that will illustrate your message point

Which media to pitch: will vary for each issue. By the time organizations are experienced, they will have a good idea if the wire services would be interested and if not what it might take to interest them. Decision making about which media to pitch revealed: The vast majority (83 percent) said they pitched targeted media. The second largest group (67 percent) said they employed a shotgun approach to pitching the media. That same number said they preferred pitching radio media. Sixty percent said they pitched heavily to national media outlets. All of this may simply mean pitching is done as needed on a story by story basis. There is no question if a story can be successfully pitched to national media, that would be most people's preference.

Barriers to presenting a story idea to the media: Groups responding provided a candid appraisal of reasons why they might not pitch a story. The issues ranged from the lack of confidence the media would be interested to the very basic of no real story.

Several gave very upbeat views on not being overcome with reasons why stories should not be pitched. Jerry Stermer, Executive Director of Voices for Illinois Children said, "We rate the priorities among our own priorities."

Jim Lewis Vice-President for Research and Planning at the Chicago Urban League also related impediments to presenting a story idea to the media, "Nothing prevents it, if it is important to us."

Other reasons cited as stopping a story from being pitched include:

- Lack of depth/no real story
- Lack of time and resources
- Don't think the media cares about the issue
- We assume that complicated discussions of issues won't be reported at all, or not in depth.
- Lack of staff time for setting up interviews, coordinating coverage, etc.
- Knowledge of recent coverage
- Lack of individual example stories
- Don't have staff or volunteer resources to write story and plan distribution
- Lack of a clear objective for trying to get coverage
- Fluid situation or the possibility of negative political fallout
- Not easily reached for follow-up
- Failure to think of it

- Wouldn't know who would really be interested and likely to report it.
- Some avoidance of publicity because of its ability to distract staff

All of these reasons suggest that there is a clear understanding of the need to do media on issues, but certain barriers have to be overcome.

Groups were asked how they evaluate proposed or existing governmental policy proposals for possible media coverage. The answers varied but reflected a will of their constituents and political reality.

- We assess whether the proposal falls in our interests or mission
- Confer with policy experts and other people on the issues t In terms of impact on poor people and communities
- We set action priorities based on items approved by delegates to the state convention, on what we think will be happening in the legislature, and on what we think is politically feasible. We have no procedure for evaluating possible media coverups. c
- We typically do not make the time to do so.
- Impact on constituents
- Review specific proposals
- For their impact on multiple levels, e.g. local impact on federal legislation

Evaluating the costs and surrounding budget issues for public policy proposals presented a dilemma for many organizations. It is no surprise that the larger the group and the better off financially that they were more likely to be able to address an evaluation of the cost as a particular public policy issue.

- Assess the number of people eligible under a new policy
- We have research analysts
- Confer with policy experts and organizations
- We evaluate budget issues based loosely on our positions on state tax policy and spending priorities, but have no expertise to really look in depth at the state or national budget.
- We seldom do.
- Subtract the savings
- Anticipate long term

Specialized training with specific policy areas was the case for 86 percent of the respondents. Those with specialized training cited these types of training.

- Experience and academic training. We also use the expertise of others.
- Research staff are trained or experienced in their fields.
- Election law issues
- Degrees In human development and social policy
- All aspects of welfare

- Yes and No. We have volunteer program specialists who have a varied amount of expertise in their specific area but don't have a program to train members in specific areas other than general education on the issue as it arises.

But not all have specialized training. Several groups cited the need to have media planning and expertise in developing a better way of getting issues covered by the media.

Groups were asked if they have **sufficient resources to research, do an analysis of issues and develop reputable media coverage**. Sixty-three percent said they had sufficient resources. Several cited being short staffed. Others said they needed to have increased expertise in order to develop public policy items for the media.

On the issue of what could be done to improve media coverage of your public policy issues all eight groups answered this question.

- More staff and time
- Additional research capability
- Provide fact sheets connecting public policy issues to campaign finance reform, ad watches and etc .
- More thought pieces
- Access to expert advice
- Develop a media plan
- More staff resources
- Improve TV coverage
- Train other organizational leaders to connect issues
- More in-depth coverage and series on issues
- More serious investigative reporting on local politics
- Time to cultivate media contacts
- The will to make that goal a priority

Changes in media coverage of public policy issues in the 21st century brought a set of strong responses. Many of the answers seemed to be based on "hope."

- I can always hope we will get more "positive" coverage
- More Internet reports with less editing like the Starr report
- More Interest in global-local analyses
- Faddish coverage such as the impact of the occurrence of the welfare time limit may increase interest for a while
- Less coverage
- More and more media outlets narrow casting or directed to a specialized sub-segment of society
- Electronic media dominates issues with shallow sound-clips and is controlled by moneyed special interest groups
- I fear we will have more focus on teen violence
- More complexity available, not necessarily at "6 and 10"

- More regional reporting
- Less reliable sources
- Less and less in-depth coverage of issues as media outlets continue to cut experienced staff and hire beginners. The search for corporate profit seems to drive what stories are covered, and
- how they are covered.
- "Cheap" reporting tends to rob attention from complex issues
- I worry we will continue simplistic analysis, i.e. test scores are the only way to measure school reform

There was a great deal of frustration expressed with the process and the sense of who as opposed to news controlling the media. There is the fear the money is the driver and issues are merely there to fill up a limited amount of space. While a cynical view, it none-the-less reflects the tug and pull of the late 90s In United States culture.

One respondent said, "I think that media coverage of complex state issues is abysmal. Although there are some good reporters out there who are probably as frustrated as I am, many seem far too cynical to seriously cover reform/policy/electoral stories."

The respondent also said, "Television covers virtually nothing that is issue based, except in an accusatory way, for example, if you are protesting. Coverage in major print media is equally problematic. We are doing more and more geographically targeted media and have had good, thoughtful coverage from dailies outside Chicago."

One solution may be as one person wrote, "We are also trying to do more talk radio."

Jan Flapan president of the League of Women Voters of Illinois said, "There seems to be a constant rush to go with the crowd, covering sensational events that don't affect the average person. Increasingly, I find Illinois television, especially, puts on what sells, not what is truly news .

A good example is the constant positioning of crime as the first story, even though the crime rate has gone down nationally and locally. People then think our society is more violent than it is; they react with fear and put up more real and imagined barriers to separate "us" and "them"

Ms. Flapan also said, "I see more coverage of what might have happened in the past, what may happen in the future, etc. To me, that's not news, that's speculation. I want hard news, what happened today, and how does that affect my life?"

Finally Ms. Flapan summed up where news coverage may be headed by using this example, "I see more polarization of the rich and poor, the haves and have nots. And less coverage of the gap, and how the poor cope.

One thing is also very clear from the organizational survey results: the coverage of news on public policy issues is a necessary and developing field One has to be equipped with the right attitude, information and drive to succeed in obtaining coverage of public policy issues.

Even with that approach there are a great deal of barriers to obtaining the coverage of public policy issues we need in our society.

This survey of media and organizational representatives has provided us a snapshot of some successes and some barriers. The survey has also provided a good look at some of the things we need to do to ensure we have good coverage of public policy issues.

Recommendations for Further Action

Based on this survey, the following recommendations to improve media coverage of public policy issues are offered:

For the Media:

- Educate your reporters and editors to the detail of issues and assign tough reporters to cover these issues;
- Do more planning to anticipate stories that may develop and assign the financial resources necessary to cover them. This is especially true as state and local governments assume more of the responsibility and costs of public policy programs; and
- Support those young hungry reporters that want to cover public policy issues. You cannot buy that kind of motivation, but you can support it.

For Organizations:

- Develop the expertise to do public policy work with the media and government;
- Take a leadership role in raising the resources to accomplish needed work with public policy work and the media; and
- Support and develop leaders and spokespeople from those most affected by public policy issues as the best experts.

Appendix: Survey Questions for Media and Organizations

For Media:

1. Please rank the factors that decide coverage of a public policy story for your media outlet: 1 (lowest) - 5 (highest)
 - a) Timeliness
 - b) Space
 - c) Cost of reporting the story
 - d) Access to information/sources
 - e) Understanding of the issue
 - f) Perceived audience value
 - g) Interest to the audience

- h) Perceived impact on local communities
 - i) Specific conditions
 - j) Other(s) (list)
2. As more decision-making resides with the states, is the media in general and your outlet in particular prepared to report on public policy issues? In general: yes no Your outlet: yes no.
 3. Please rank the categories of sources which you usually consider to be most important for a public policy story: 1 (lowest) - 5 (highest)
 - a) Politicians
 - b) People affected
 - c) Non-profit groups
 - d) Bureaucrats
 - e) For-profit business groups
 - f) Other(s)
 4. What prevents you from writing or broadcasting a story? (list up to three reasons in priority order).
 5. Rank the importance of each of these factors in reporting on policy proposals when covering an issue: 1 (lowest) - 5 (highest)
 - a) Cost
 - b) Impact on people affected
 - c) Impact on budget
 - d) Politics
 - e) Impact on your media outlet coverage area
 - f) Other(s)
 6. How do you evaluate the costs and surrounding budget issues for public policy/governmental action (proposed or existing)?

Do you include estimates of fiscal impact in many or all stories? Yes No
 7. Have you had specialized training or have access to experts to assist in specific policy areas? Yes No
 8. Do you have sufficient resources to research, do an analysis of and develop fair coverage? Yes No
 9. What could be done to improve media coverage of public policy issues? (List up to three improvements ranked in priority order)

10. What changes in media coverage of public policy issues do you see occurring into the 21st century?

For non-media

1. Rank the following factors in your decision to pitch your story to media outlet for possible coverage: 1 (least important) - 5 (most important)
 - a) Confidence
 - b) Knowledge of the media
 - c) Solid information available
 - d) controversy
 - e) Impact on funding
 - f) Resources
 - g) Other(s)
2. What are the major steps you take in presenting a story to the media? (list up to three in priority order)
3. How do you decide on which media to pitch? Rank the types of outlets for possible coverage: 1 (least important) - 5 (most important)
 - a) Local
 - b) Regional
 - c) State House corps
 - d) National
 - e) Print
 - f) Television
 - g) Radio
 - h) Wires
 - i) Columnists
 - j) Shotgun approach
 - k) Targeted
4. What prevents you from pitching a story to the media? (list u to three in priority order)
5. How do you evaluate proposed or existing governmental policy proposals the media may possibly be covering? (list up to three in priority order)
6. How do you evaluate the costs and surrounding budget issues for public policy proposals? (list up to three in priority order)
7. Do you have specialized training to assist in developing specific policy areas? Yes No
8. Do you have sufficient resources to research, do an analysis of issues and develop reputable media coverage? Yes No

9. What could be done to improve media coverage of your public policy issues? (list up to three in priority order)
10. What changes in media coverage of public policy issues do you see occurring in the 21st century?

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