INCREASED ADVOCACY

A STRONGER VOICE
A STRONGER PRESENCE

DELTA SIGMA THETA SORORITY, INC.

NATIONAL SOCIAL ACTION COMMISSION
2011 REGIONAL CONFERENCE WORKSHOP CYCLE
WORKSHOP AGENDA

SOCIAL ACTION IN DELTA SIGMA THETA

- Mission, Historical Perspective and Social Action Structure
- Social Action Agenda
- Goals and Objectives, Action Steps, Social Action Work Tool
- Commitment

Increased Advocacy - A Stronger Voice – A Stronger Presence

- All Advocacy is Local
- Engaging the Decision Makers
- Advocacy Do’s and Don’ts
- Conducting a community-based advocacy campaign
- Media Advocacy

Small Group Exercise (time permitting)

Questions and Answers
MISSION

- Political Awareness and Involvement
- Address issues that affect public policy, economic viability and social justice
- Promote leadership, advocacy, and empowerment among members to bring about effective solutions to challenges
- Establish positions on emerging or perennial public issues determines appropriate response, and direct the actions of members and chapters

“ I will use my influence toward the enactment of laws for the protection of the unfortunate and weak and for the repeal of those depriving human beings of their privileges and rights.”
HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

........ our Founders formed Delta Sigma Theta Sorority with hopes that the organization would become a viable force in the movement for social change.

........Delta’s first public act, two months after our founding in 1913, was to participate in the Women’s Suffrage March, and out commitment to social action was recognized in the Washington Times.

........in 1917 the National Vigilance Committee was formed.

........in the 1920s and 1930s Delta fought the backlash of racism and discrimination against black women.

........In the 1940s in concert with other organizations lobbied Congress to end discrimination and segregation of the armed forces.
HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

- Late 1950’s & early 1960’s targeted racism, sexism, discriminatory employment practices, unfair housing policies, and other social ills and actively participated in the Civil Rights Movement.

- August 1963 – Social Action Commission was established and advocated for the Voting Rights Act.

- March 1989 – First annual “Delta Days in the Nation’s Capital”

- August 1995 – Deltas participated in the 75th Anniversary of women’s suffrage march.

HOW WE NETWORK

National President

National Social Action Commission

Regional Social Action Coordinators

State Social Action Coordinators

Chapter Social Action Chairpersons
Social Action in the Chapter

Each chapter is expected to include a social action component in its operating structure. The customary procedure is that each chapter establishes a social action committee, headed by a Social Action chair.

Following is the role of the chapter in social action:

▲ Appoint a chapter Social Action Chairperson.
▲ Receive social action information from State Social Action Coordinator, and/or the National Social Action Commission.
▲ Conduct chapter social action activities and programs in the local community and/or on college/university campus.
▲ Initiate participation in state and national Delta Days at the capitol.
▲ Prepare resolutions for approval at the regional and national levels.
▲ Nominate recipients for the biennial social action awards.
▲ Send report of chapter social action activities and program to the State Social Action Coordinator and to National Headquarters.
Regional and Local Issues

- Critical Elections and Referendums for Localities & States
- Local and state issues can have national impact, e.g. Arizona Immigration Law, Health Reform
DELTA SOCIAL ACTION AGENDA

- Economy
- Jobs
- Justice and Equality
- Energy
- Affordable Housing
- Foreclosures
- Supreme Court
- Wars -- Iraq & Afghanistan
- Global Terrorism
- Global Warming
- Education – Pre K to Post Doc
- Foreign Policy
- Global Trade
- Health Care
- Immigration
- Violence Against Women
CALL TO ACTION

- Control our destiny
- Become a constant, vocal stakeholder in the issues that matter to us
- Speak up and don’t be tricked into inaction or apathy
- Institute ongoing, sustainable advocacy for local, state and national issues of significance to the communities we serve
- Make our voices heard --- continually, not just on “Delta Days”
- Make every day a “Delta Day” in the mind of legislators
SOCIAL ACTION GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- To develop the membership’s appreciation of Delta’s potential for influence in the community.

- To increase the membership’s knowledge of current local and national issues, so that every Delta will be an informed and effective citizen, advocate, and voter.

- To encourage the membership’s active participation as individuals in political activity.

- To influence the enactment of legislation, national and local, of particular interest to African-Americans and women.
SOCIAL ACTION GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- To maintain vigilance over action or inaction by local judicial and administrative agencies and officials.

- To cultivate, in the membership, a person-to-person relationship with the community power structure.

- To join and volunteer leadership in civic and other social action organizations, including diverse groups.

- To encourage increased appointment and upgrading of African American women in policy-making
Taking on an issue ...

- Clearly identify the issue
- Research issue for most reasonable resolution
- Construct action path to produce desired outcome
- Delineate scope of impact and decision level – city, county, state, national – clarity on real decision makers
- Create strategic timeline & central point for tracking against strategic plan and assessing action reports on assigned tasks
- Engage appropriate players – chapter, state or regional network and/or build coalitions with other groups with like interests
Taking on an issue.

- Assign tasks to ensure each critical action is executed according to plan and timely with an action report.
- Track and assess progress or lack thereof – create and deploy alternative strategy if original plan not producing desired results.
- Maintain ongoing communications with execution team and all other key players.
- Publicize your actions throughout the process – state what you are going to change and report on how you are doing along the way – build support for your position.
Increased Advocacy-Action Steps

- Initiate annual “Delta Days” at the city hall, state capital and the school board with sustainable follow-up & ongoing contact
- Maintain ongoing dialogue with legislators and policy makers to interject DST’s perspectives in the formative discussions
- Make DST a viable factor in all policy formulation and decision-making processes
- Utilize resolutions to publicize your objective
- Keep your seat at the table! A stronger voice! A stronger presence
Getting your message across

Advocacy is an ongoing process

- Legislators face so many competing causes that one visit or one letter won't make much of an impact. Open the door for further communication by following up.

Follow up…

- a meeting with a note thanking them and further explaining points brought up at the meeting
- with a phone call. Not only will you be able to state your position again, you will make a stronger, more memorable impression on your legislator and his/her staff.
Getting your message across

- From your local City Council to your Senators in Washington, D.C., advocacy is a lot easier than most people think when you plan ahead! A legislative visit is merely a meeting for you to tell your elected representative what you think about a certain issue or bill.

- Remember, these people work for YOU!
Meeting with your Legislator

Meeting in person with your legislator is a wonderful way to cultivate a relationship, personalize your message, and ensure that your legislator knows exactly where you stand on a particular issue.

REQUESTING YOUR MEETING
- Make your request in writing.
- Suggest specific times and dates for your meeting.
- State the issue(s) and legislation for discussion.
- Be sure to let them know that you are a constituent.
Meeting with your Legislator

PREPARING FOR YOUR MEETING

- Gather information on the issue(s) for discussion.
- Decide who will attend the meeting. (Limit the number to four or five.)
- Agree on the talking points. Plan out your meeting. Conduct a dress rehearsal prior to the meeting and lay out all of the points to be discussed.
Meeting with your Legislator

DURING THE MEETING

- Keep it short! A good meeting will last twenty minutes or less.
- Start by thanking the elected official for his/her support of legislation on other Delta issues. You might also consider mentioning any personal, professional or political connections you may have.
- Stick to your talking points. Drafting a position statement to present would be helpful in keeping you on point.
- Bring in personal and/or local examples of the impact of the legislation.
- Ask the elected official to take specific action and wait for his/her answer. Make every effort to get specific responses to your inquiries. Do not leave the meeting until your specific concerns are addressed.
Meeting with your Legislator

- Saying "I don't know" can be a smart political move. You need not be an expert on the topic you are discussing. It is permissible to tell the elected official that you will need to get information for them later. This can give you the chance to put your strongest arguments into their files and contact them again about the issue. However, set deadlines for follow-up.

- If the elected official has not taken a position on the issue, ask when you can except him/her to make a decision. Follow-up with the office around that time.
Meeting with your Legislator

AFTER THE MEETING

- Each person should send thank you letters promptly.
- Follow up in a timely fashion with any requested materials and information.
- If the office needs more time to get information, set another deadline and follow-up.
Advocacy Do’s

- Do be courteous and friendly.
- Do take the opportunity to say 'Thank You' whenever it arises.
- Do know the issues thoroughly and be familiar with all sides of an issue.
- Do be a good listener.
- Do humanize your message. Include anecdotal stories about how programs and public dollars impact real people.
- Do make sure your elected officials are on your mailing list
- Do send personalized invitations to them for special events and receptions.
- Do get to know elected officials' staff members and keep them informed on an ongoing basis. Invite staff members to events and programs.
- Do participate in building strong local and statewide coalitions with other cultural, civic, educational and business institutions in the public and private sector.
Advocacy Don’ts

- Don't preach or lecture.
- Don't use a negative or intimidating tone.
- Don't expect your meeting with your legislator to be long. Maximize your time by whittling down your presentation to include an opening statement, a few supporting details, a closing summary, and a request.
- Don't bluff. If you don't know an answer, say so, and call back with the correct information at the next opportunity.
- Don't accept a general answer to your request.
- Don't wait until the last minute to contact your elected official about an issue before the legislature.
- Don't forget to enjoy your visit!
Using Media to Advance Advocacy

- Media advocacy is the proactive, strategic use of media—in combination with other strategies—to advance advocacy goals. Media advocacy involves viewing the media as a tool that can be effectively used to create an environment for change.

- Recognize and harnessing the power of the media in moving an advocacy agenda.
Media Advocacy- “Why Use It?”

Many reform efforts aren’t easy to achieve. Often, success depends upon broader public support for change and sustained pressure on public officials to act.

Through the media, you can

- frame the issue,
- increase public awareness,
- shape public opinion, and
- build coalitions around a common issue.
Building Coalitions

- Organizing or coalition building, organizations—together to develop a collective vision for their community and achieve a common goal; to win a battle that is more likely to be won if many stand up together instead of just a few.

- Progress and change happens when people collectively organize for change.

- ENGAGE YOUR COMMUNITY!
Why Organize Coalitions?

- Organizing builds power. Bringing people who support your issue to the table gives you leverage and notice from decision-makers, elected officials and those that are integral to the success of any advocacy campaign.

- The media are more likely to take notice when you can draw a crowd and when diverse voices are raised.

- It gives you staying power. To achieve and maintain reform requires sustained vigilance.

- Identifies and develops the leaders and the movement you need to sustain progress of your advocacy efforts.

- Organizing builds community through collective problem-solving and instills in people a sense of their own power and capacity to effect change.
When is Coalition Building Effective?

- In every aspect of your advocacy efforts
- When it becomes necessary for a change around issues that impact community
- To display a sense of strength in numbers, especially for maximum media impact.
- To be effective in advocating for legislation, policy change, and reform.
Become a Part of the Solution

Get involved, participate in the process:

- Run for school boards, county committee, district leader, state committee, PTA
- Seek opportunities for local appointments i.e. community planning boards, civic associations, library boards, police precinct councils, park and recreation associations, tenant and coop boards
Use Your Social Action Worktool

PDF download available @ www.deltasigmatheta.org

- Organizing chapter committee
- Tracking legislation
- Writing legislative letters
- Addressing elected officials
- Preparing timely issue papers
- Listing of relevant websites

- Effective advocacy
- Preparing effective resolutions
- Planning a Delta Days conference
- Planning Delta Youth Days
- Building coalitions
- Voter education & registration
TELL US...

Your Chapter/State Advocacy
- Stories
- Experiences
- Best Practices
- Tips, and
- Winning Strategies
Deltas on the Hill

Small Group Exercise

Sorors gather in small groups and imagine they are visiting the Capitol Hill office of their member of Congress. With the background information presented below, sorors will:

- Prioritize the issues as a group
- Assign a soror to ask a question about each issue
- Practice a round of questions
- Discuss what next steps sorors should take to ensure that the member of Congress will be responsive to the sorority’s position on the issues.
ISSUES

- **GROUP A** - Schools in the Congressman’s district do not have computers and the students do not have adequate books. The Congressman is a member of the Congressional committee that controls education spending.

- **GROUP B** - The Congressman’s hometown has a serious problem with mortgage foreclosures and property values are falling. The Congressman missed an important vote that would have provided relief.

- **GROUP C** - The Congressman has voted against efforts that would strengthen efforts to make sure people of color are counted in the Census and his stand could impact redistricting.

- **GROUP D** - Two hospitals recently closed in the Congressman’s district due to the burden of having to care for uninsured patients. The Congressman has not yet said where he stands on a plan to provide health insurance for the working poor.

- **GROUP E** - The Congressman has not endorsed legislation that would provide U.S. relief to African countries that have been devastated by HIV-AIDS.
QUESTIONS????
KEEP IT GOING...
It’s Our Oath

- Every Member of DST committed to being alert and proactive on social action issues – check the DST website frequently along with your national & local media sources
- If a current event is developing that needs to be addressed and there is no communication or call to action from your chapter, state or regional social action coordinator then contact your Chapter President, Regional Director, or DST Headquarters --- and ask “Why no action by DST?”
- National Headquarters Contact: Candi Mundon, Public Policy Specialist, 202-986-2400; cmundon@deltasigmatheta.org
“The stakes are too high for government to be a spectator sport.”

Soror Barbara Jordan