

Conflict Prevention and Resolution Forum
Advocacy on Behalf of Peacebuilding during Political Campaigns (and beyond)
February 13, 2007

Moderator: **Yonce Shelton**

Panelists: **Jasmeet Sidhu, Lynn Kunkle and David Devlin-Foltz**

Given the heat of the political season, the February Conflict Prevention and Resolution Forum focused on the role of advocacy in peacebuilding during political campaigns and beyond. Our expert panelists covered every side of the issue. Jasmeet Sidhu of the Alliance for Justice provided information on the legal and regulatory parameters governing non-profit and foundation advocacy participation. Lynn Kunkle of 3D Security Initiative discussed the policies that are and should be advanced by the peacebuilding community during political campaigns and beyond. David Devlin-Foltz of the Aspen Institute presented an interactive tool on how to prepare an advocacy plan for political campaigns. Yonce Shelton, Program Director at Search for Common Ground-USA who moderated the forum, promptly started off by asking the participants to reflect upon what will happen if a presidential candidate or future President asks one of the panelists, "What and how can something be done in advocating peacebuilding?"

Jasmeet Sidhu from Alliance for Justice (AfJ) started the panelist presentations. Ms. Sidhu first explained the rules and laws that govern election activity. She believes that heading into the election season, non-profit organizations--501 (c)(3)--especially need to clearly know what is legally considered as advocacy and what are its limitations.

First, Ms. Sidhu stated that a 501 (c)(3) should never engage in partisan political activity, meaning any activity supporting a candidate who is officially running, considering running, or who has drafted efforts to run. It also applies to any public office candidate. She then went on to explain the penalties for a 501 (c)(3) who engages in partisan political activity, which include the denial or revocation of the tax-exempt status and imposition of excise taxes. Activities are measured as non-partisan through a facts and circumstances test.

Then, Ms. Sidhu delineated what a 501 (c)(3) can do, which includes: issue advocacy, voter registration, voter education, candidate education and individual electoral activity. Furthermore, if a 501 (c)(3) is going to give out candidate questionnaires and voter guides, it should not endorse or pledge a particular candidate, but should include a broad range of issues, be distributed to all and include unbiased questions. If a 501 (c)(3) holds candidate debates and forums, it should invite all viable candidates, apply rules fairly, select an impartial moderator, invite unbiased audiences, and include a broad range of issues. If a 501 (c)(3) invites a candidate to appear in some event, it must be sure that if the invitation is because of candidacy, equal opportunity for all other candidates to appear must be provided, and, if the invitation is not about candidacy, be it expert advice, no equal opportunity for all other candidates is required. Finally, if an individual who works for a 501 (c)(3) decides to do electoral activity, he or she is free to

do so, but should be sure to act in their own capacity, not in the organization's name, and be sure that the member organization cannot ratify the individual's preference for a candidate.

More resources can be found at www.allianceforjustice.org. You may also contact Ms. Sidhu and/or Alliance for Justice by sending an e-mail to advocacy@afj.org or calling 866-NPLOBBY.

Lynn Kunkle continued after Ms. Sidhu's presentation. She focused on answering the question, "What should the peacebuilding community be doing as advocacy?"

Ms. Kunkle decided to answer this question from the point of view of security. She believes that security has always being an important issue of advocacy. Involved parties commonly ask themselves what makes them safe and secure. She believes that unfortunately, although peacebuilding masters the complexity of security and should be challenging the mainstream militarized biases, it is presently not doing so. The peacebuilding community is not actively involved, and there is a need to translate its work into policy. The public hungers for more information about it. Regrettably, there are limitations in peacebuilding advocacy, such as: resources, a steep learning curve, lack of experience, and advocates moving in separate directions from each other.

Therefore, Ms. Kunkle suggests and defines several ways in which the peacebuilding community could move into the security realm, such as proposing policy in ways lawmakers can understand through information-sharing processes that are short and precise, including summaries and catchy phrases. Other ideas include strengthening the case for civil capacity as security policy, create partnerships with natural allies such as the military, businesses, evangelicals and conservatives, step off the moral high ground, challenge the common perception of pacifists as altruists, become constituents for human security, take advantage of election years as the moment to change ways through advocacy, op-eds, etc., and finally, to always think strategically.

Ms. Kunkle trusts that if the peacebuilding community speaks out about the issue of security through the framework explained above, then there will be greater impact.

David Devlin-Foltz finalized the panelist's presentations. He provided a hands-on *Advocacy Progress Planner* tool he uses in his work to help organizations frame research and plan and evaluate public policy work. He emphasized that, although he has applied the tool mainly in the USA, it has international applicability as well. Also, he has found out that many advocates have a difficult time knowing how to do advocacy, and that this tool served them quite well in achieving their purposes.

Therefore, Mr. Devlin-Foltz introduced several steps from the planner which he recommends the peacebuilding community follow in order to prepare an advocacy plan for political campaigns, which include (1) Plan first: think about goals. In other words, what needs to happen?; (2) Think about your audience: who needs to hear your message? Choose audiences: elected officials, candidates, public administrators,

media, business, community leaders, courts, etc.; (3) Think about what you and your organization needs: what will it take to bring about the needed change? Choose inputs and choose contextual factors; (4) What activities and tactics are needed? Choose activities and tactics: lobbying, relationship building, grassroots organizing; finally, (5) What are the capacity and policy benchmarks on the way to your goal? How to measure results? How to do it? Choose outcomes and benchmarks: Partnerships and alliances, organizational capacity, media coverage, issue reframing, awareness, public will, etc.

For more detailed information about the Advocacy Progress Planner tool, Mr. Devlin-Foltz directed to please visit the Aspen Institute website at:

<http://planning.continuousprogress.org/>

Afterwards, audience members asked questions and provided commentaries about the panelist's presentations.