

Lifting Our Voices:

The Crucial Role of Community Health Centers in Building a Powerful Health Center Movement



Today We Will Discuss:

- **A**dvocacy and the importance of making our voices heard
- **B**uilding a base of support as a first step toward a public policy plan for community health centers
- **C**ommunicating our message to policy makers

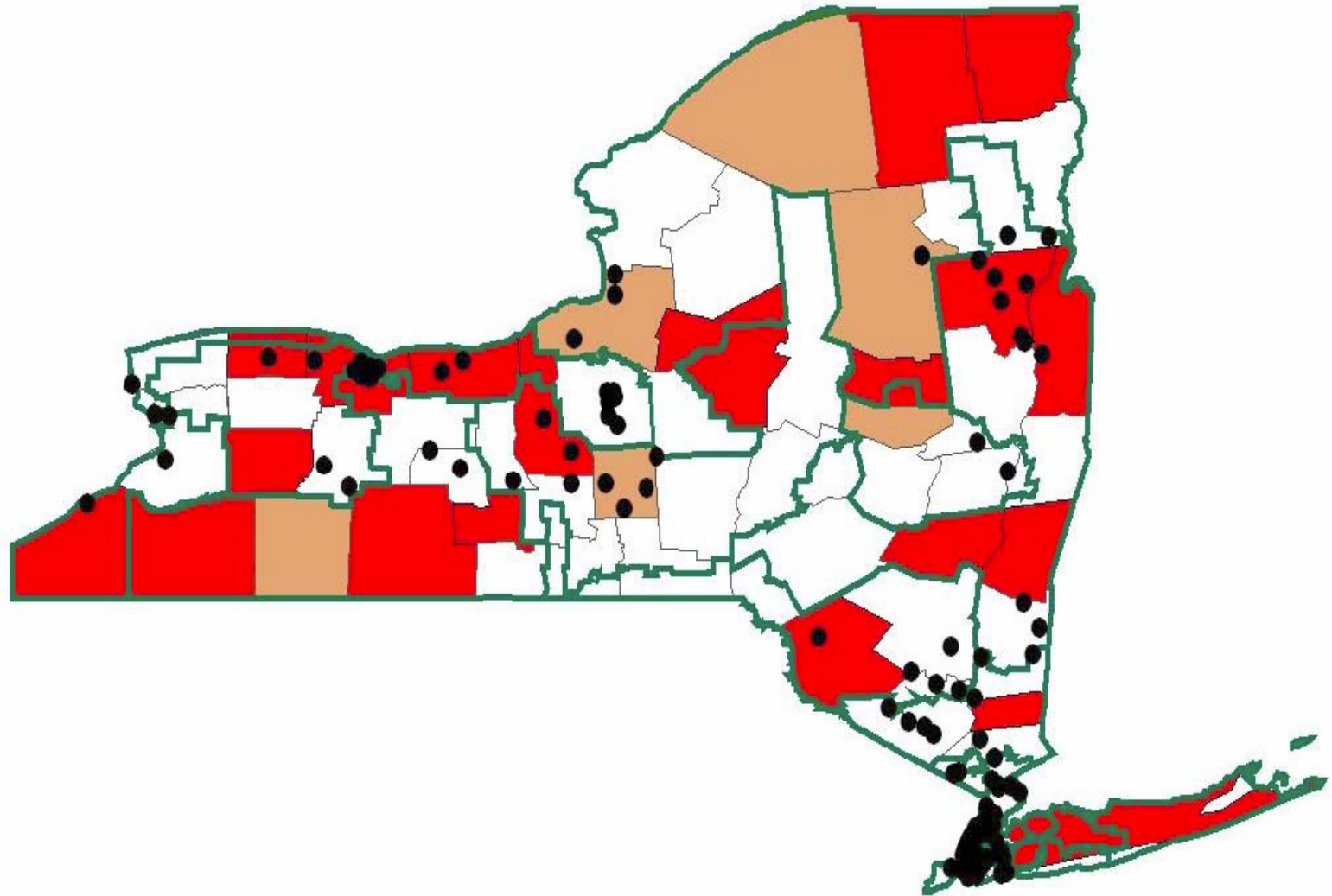
ad·vo·ca·cy (*noun*)

the act or process of supporting a cause or proposal – both within communities and to local, state, and national policymakers

ad·vo·cate (*noun*)

a person who argues for a cause; a supporter or defender

- Individual actions vs. CHC actions



All Politics are Local

Does your community know what you do?

Do you know what your policymakers are doing?

What is the Number One Priority of Legislators?

Getting Elected.

What is the Number Two Priority of Legislators?

Getting Re-elected.

The Importance of Speaking Out

Practically Speaking, the NYS
Legislature can do anything it wants
- **to** you, or **for** you!

- As examples...governing the scope of how you practice, deciding CHP eligibility, allocating funds for uncompensated care

How Can Our Advocacy Efforts Impact the Legislative Process?

- The system runs on people speaking out for their cause
- New policies and laws start with ideas from citizens, not legislators
- Legislative battles are not won in the marble halls, but in communities across the state
- All politics is “local”

A Review of the NYS Legislature

- Our legislature is comprised of two bodies: Senate and the Assembly
- They are elected for two-year sessions
- It is a citizens legislature
- The Legislature meets for several days a week from January through June and at the call of the Legislative leaders at other times during the year.
- Each year, over 17,000 bills are introduced

A Review of the NYS Legislature

- A bill passed by one house must be passed in the same form by the other before it can be sent to the Governor for his signature or veto.
- Powers of the Legislature include:
 - appropriation of funds for the operation of state government and its agencies and for aid to local governments;
 - definition of acts or omissions that constitute crimes and the setting of penalties;
 - promotion of the public welfare, including that of the State's indigent, mentally ill and unemployed;
 - and the correction, clarification, amendment or repeal of laws that are outdated or confusing.
 - **override of a Governor's veto with the support of two-thirds of the membership in each house.**

A Review of the NYS Regulatory Process

- When a bill becomes a law it's not over...
 - governing state agency must promulgate regulations
 - The state agency publishes proposed state regulations
 - Published in the State Registry
 - Comment period of 60 days
 - Agency decides whether to adapt, change or accept
 - Comments are summarized
- No timeline of when the agency must act

New York State Budget Process

January

Assembly & Senate reconvene; Governor "State of the State" Message and release of Executive Budget



Media- Op/Ed, Ed. Boards

February

Fiscal committees - **Senate Finance** and **Assembly Ways and Means** committees.

Budget Conference Committees **joint public hearings on major programs** over the course of several weeks



Meetings with Health Budget Committee
CHCANYS submits budget testimony

March

Budget Conference Committees continue to meet to reach agreement and report out to leadership committee / "mother-ship"

Leadership 3-way meetings to reach agreement and avoid veto.



Grassroots Advocacy Day
Grassroots Action Alerts - **respond quickly**

April

April 1st – Legislature must pass budget to meet deadline.

Governor has 10 days to act once sent.



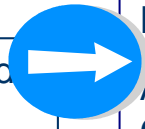
Cont. Meetings w/ Leadership
Continue to respond to Grassroots Action Alerts

May-June

If Governor issues Veto, Legislature must act by end of session for overrides; End of session in late June

Fall

State agency program package is assembled and submitted to the Division of the Budget



Meet with Legislators in District
Arrange Tours of Health Centers

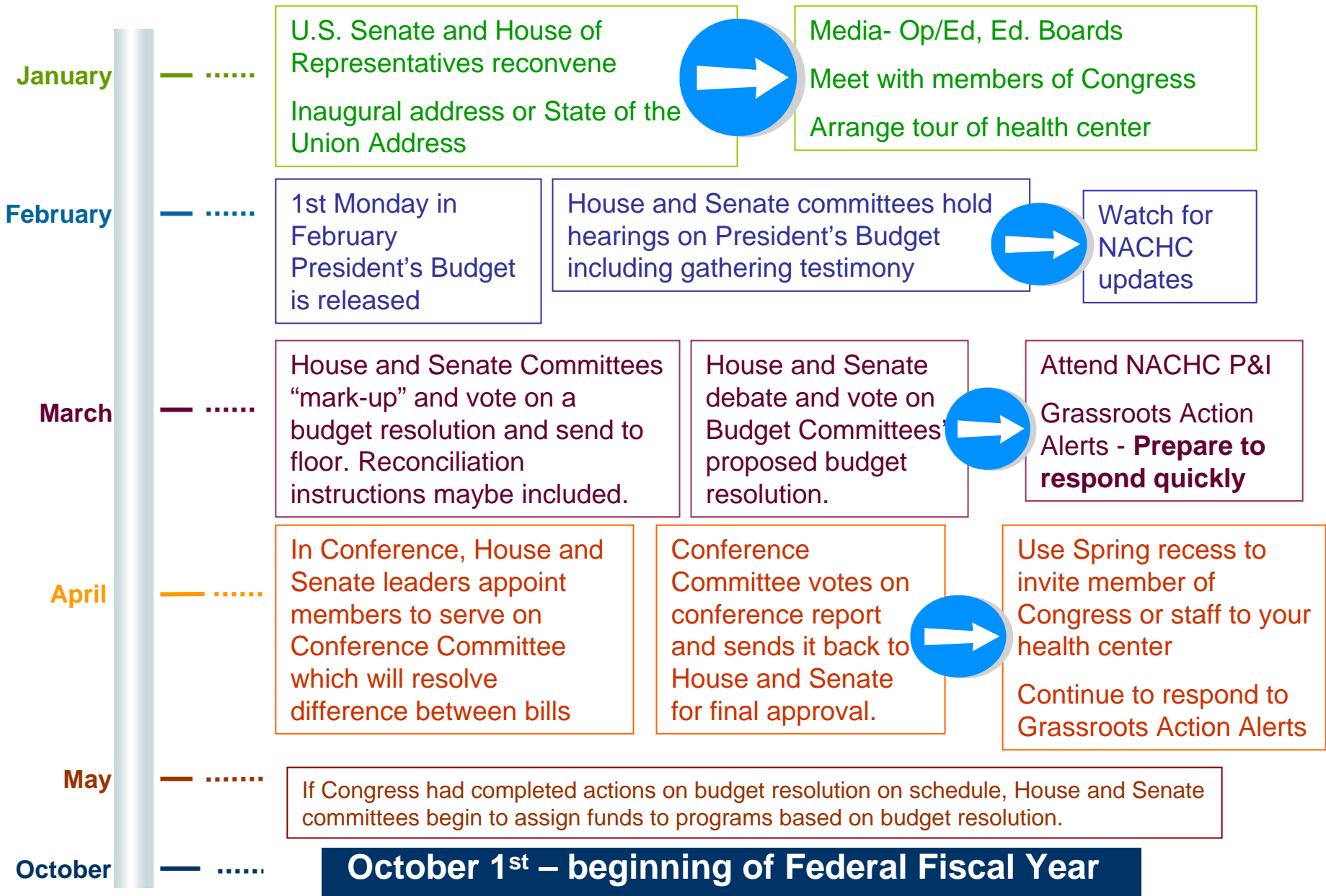
A Review of the US Congress

- The US Congress is comprised of two bodies: Senate and House of Representatives
- New York has 29 Representatives and 2 Senators
- HR are elected for two-year term
- Senators are elected for a six-year term

A Review of the US Congress

- In Congress the house bills do not have to be identical
 - If only minor changes are made to a bill, it will go back to the first chamber for concurrence. However, when the other chamber significantly alters the bill, a conference committee is formed to reconcile the differences between the House and Senate versions
 - If the conferees are unable to reach agreement, the legislation dies

Congressional Budget Process



What are Our Goals of CHCANYS Policy Team?

To Keep our Health Centers Strong and Our Communities Healthy by:

- Providing information and expertise
- Finding solutions and funding
- Identifying other supportive campaigns
- Keeping you informed and involved year-round

www.state.ny.us

www.assembly.state.ny.us

www.senate.state.ny.us

What are Our Goals as Advocates for Community Health Centers?

To Keep our Health Centers Strong and
Our Communities Healthy by:

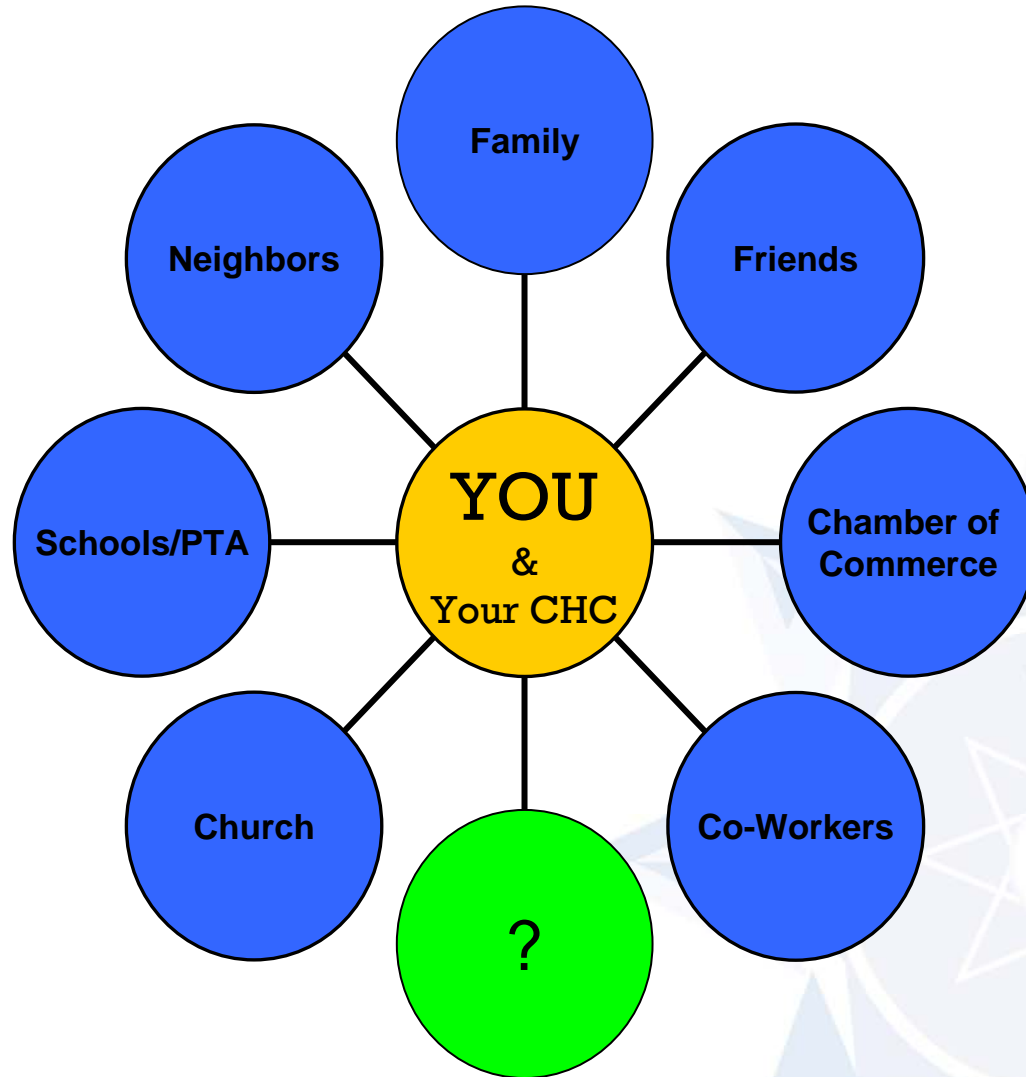
**Advocating for public policy,
legislation, and regulations that
support community health centers
and reduce
disparities in health care**

What are our Roles as Advocates for Community Health Centers?

- Get the votes needed from your policymakers to pass or stop legislation and budget appropriations
- Establish continuous, effective communication with your public officials **all year round**
- Build supportive networks to support our goals
- Build relationships with the local media
- Bring people to Albany for Community Health Center Grassroots Advocacy Day, March 12th

Building a Base of Support: *Our Plan for Strategic Alliances*

- Work in partnership with CHCANYS on a shared public policy plan
- Join other organizations that support Primary Care health issues: coalitions work!
- Work with state agency staff: DOH, OMH
 - not all issues require legislative action
- Target key legislators and their staff on priorities
 - identify a legislative champion
- Develop a system to stay in contact with you and other supporters



Communicating Our Message to Legislators and Our Communities

- Message (no more than 3-4 points)
- Customize message to your health center
- Stay on message (Consistency is Power)
- Identify messengers
- Develop a plan to deliver our message
 - Target legislators through face-to-face meetings
 - Develop other creative methods of getting our message across

Put a Face on the Problem



Meeting with Public Officials is Important

- Planning a meeting
 - Make appointment in advance.
 - Indicate how long of a meeting is needed.
 - Indicate who will be attending.
 - Note whether they are users of your services and/or professional titles.
 - Indicate where you would like the meeting to be held.
 - When meeting with a legislator you can either meet in the District Office or Albany Office.
 - From January until at least May legislators are in their Albany Offices at the beginning of the week.
 - Indicate what topics will you be discussing.
 - Develop a strategy for the meeting in advance.

For all Face-To-Face Meetings:

- Be calm but enthusiastic – it is ok if you don't have all of the answers
- Be clear about what you want: ask your legislator for their support before leaving
- Leave written information about how you can be reached
- Thank them and let them know you plan to stay in touch
- Let your community know the results.
- Follow up after the meeting with a thank-you note

Communicating Our Message

Other strategies that can be used...

- ✓ Visits to community health centers
- ✓ Personal letters
- ✓ Telephone calls
- ✓ E-mails
- ✓ Post card campaigns
- ✓ Petitions
- ✓ Public hearings/public forums
- ✓ Advocacy Days

CHC  **NYS** | *Grassroots Action Network*

Community Health Care Association of New York State

Defining New Directions in **Community Health Care Organizing**

**Join the Grassroots Action
Network Now!**

www.chcanys.org

- What is Your Advocacy Culture
 - Are you Prepared to Respond.
 - Is there a committee that exists or could be put together that can respond?
 - Is there a point person?
 - Build in incentives
 - Have a plan of action to make it happen!

Be Creative in Responding

- Using existing Taskforces / Coalitions.
- What other Organizations would be interested?
- Hold a brownbag lunch.
- Are there other groups connected to your organization that would be interested?
- Involve the Patients in your Health Centers.
- Use volunteers

We Need to Hear from You.

- We count on you to be the voices for Community Health Centers in your communities.
- Our legislative priorities are determined by you.
- The pressure exerted at the community level makes the difference on the fate of legislation.

Community Health Center Advocacy Day March 12, 2007



Preparing for the Advocacy Day Meetings

- **BRING people from your health center and community!**
- Make appointments for the afternoon.
- Allow time between appointments to get to your next appointment.
- Call and confirm the day before.
- Bring along letters of support from the community.
- Bring a brief statement about your program and any handout materials about your program.

Tips for Conducting a Successful Meeting

Learn about the issue:

- How it will affect the patients and communities we serve generally and,
- Most importantly how it will affect the patients in your community.

Include examples!

Meeting Time: Presenting Your Issue

- If your legislator is unavailable ask to talk with a staff person.
- Be sure to do introductions.
- Be brief and persuasive.
- If possible, open with issues your legislator agrees with.
- Be sure to acknowledge and thank the legislator for past efforts.
- Ask for the legislator's point of view.
- It's okay to say "I don't know."
- Try to get a specific response to your request.

Follow-up!

- A thank-you is always in order.
 - Follow up with a letter, phone call or subsequent visit.
 - Restate the specific commitment the legislator made.
- Send information requested.
- Let CHCANYS know how it went and any needed follow-up.

Frequently Asked Questions

- Do I need to be an expert on the legislation?
- What if the legislator asks for statistics demonstrating the need for the legislation?
- How long will the meeting last?
- What type of information do I need to have with me on the policy priorities?
- Should I be discouraged if a staff member or intern meets with me?
- Does my voice count?

Doing Policy Work Year Round

Responding and Keeping in
Contact with the CHCANYS