

Case Studies

STATE | LOCAL | BALLOT INITIATIVE

CASE STUDIES

States

- 1 Removing Barriers for Innovative Treatments
- 2 Preventing Wrong-Headed Broadband Proposals
- 3 Defeating a Commission's Market-Disrupting Proposal

1 Removing Barriers for Innovative Treatments

CHALLENGE:

A pharmaceutical client produced an innovative form of medication to treat opioid use disorder. However, manufacturers of a slightly different form of the drug had hired lobbyists to enact state laws that favored their own drug, and in some cases nearly closed the market for our client's treatment method.

STRATEGY:

We vetted, interviewed, and hired lobbyists in seven states to address the varying barriers that our client's competitors had established. We managed the day-to-day lobbying activities across the states to ensure progress on the required regulatory and statutory changes. To support our lobbying efforts, we managed a public affairs campaign that provided validation for these policy changes. Our recruited allies and organizations in the addiction community lent their credibility to our efforts to expand addiction treatment options for doctors and patients.

RESULTS:

In our target states, legislatures passed and governors signed legislation repealing government-sanctioned preference for particular treatment methods. As a result, our client gained access to the same state programs that other companies had while doctors and patients won access to more treatment options – increasing the likelihood that any given patient receives correctly tailored treatment.

2 Preventing Wrong-Headed Broadband Proposals

CHALLENGE:

During a legislative session in Tennessee, three bills proposed allowing local governments to partner with electric utilities to extend municipal broadband networks. These networks would be built on the backbone of the existing power grid, meaning they would be heavily subsidized by the existing electricity ratepayers and compete against private enterprises that had already invested heavily to provide this service.

STRATEGY:

We highlighted the threat to local businesses, engaged ideological allies of the bills' sponsors, and exposed our adversaries' monopolistic advantages and shady collusion. We worked to highlight the negative impact on small businessmen and women who operate local internet service providers by recruiting and organizing dozens of these business owners. We also

worked to illustrate that this was poor public policy from an ideological perspective. A host of organizations and think tanks weighed in directly with the legislature and the media to drive home this message.

RESULTS:

Our opposition campaign led to the bills in question being defeated or tabled indefinitely.

3 Defeating a Commission's Market-Disrupting Proposal

CHALLENGE:

In 2020, a member of a government commission in a major oil-producing state recommended curtailing oil production with the intention of helping to raise oil prices. The commissioner and the proposal's backers argued that oil field shutdowns appeared inevitable and that without the commission's action, wells would be shut down in a haphazard manner that disrupts the industry and causes economic waste. A hearing and comment period were held to address the issue.

STRATEGY:

We framed the issue on terms that the full commission would agree with. We developed messaging that took into account the disruption of the free market that would benefit out-of-state producers, the penalty the curtailment would have on efficient producers, and the signaling that the move would have to other oil-producing countries that they were winning the price war. To deliver these

messages in hearings and in the media, we recruited a coalition of former state officials, energy security officials, and trade and tax experts. Furthermore, we conducted opposition research that found that two companies that would benefit from the proposal had contributed significantly to the campaign of the commissioner who proposed the mandatory production cuts. We highlighted the undue influence to the media and commission.

RESULTS:

The commissioner withdrew his proposal after a sustained campaign of opposition from the hearing, testimony comments, and media commentary. The rest of the commission, including the chairman, announced their opposition to the production cuts.

CASE STUDIES

Local

- 1 Positioning Our Client to Lead on Environmental Challenges
- 2 Securing Local Support for a Processing Facility
- 3 Defeating Industry-Threatening Ordinances

1 Positioning Our Client to Lead on Environmental Challenges

CHALLENGE:

Flexible plastic film is often excluded from the list of acceptable items for curbside pick-up of recyclable materials, resulting in tons of plastic film, bags, and wrap ending up in landfills where they present an environmental threat. Our client, a producer of plastic film consumer goods, wanted to increase the recycling of its products through curbside collection – positioning the company as a constructive partner in solving an environmental challenge.

STRATEGY:

We identified municipalities in key states where we wanted to introduce curbside collection of plastic film for recycling. Our lobbyists worked with public officials to advocate for these programs and to show that they can provide value to the community and environment. Our messaging and campaign overcame opposition from incumbent waste haulers who claim that this type of a program would be difficult and expensive.

RESULTS:

Recycling programs that include the curbside collection of plastic film materials have been introduced in multiple jurisdictions in each of our identified states. By working closely with elected officials throughout the process, we have positioned these outcomes as good politics and good policy. And we have positioned our client as a leader in developing solutions to an ongoing environmental challenge.

2 Securing Local Support for a Processing Facility

CHALLENGE:

Just days before a crucial vote on a tax abatement for a multi-billion dollar plastics processing complex, DCI Group was engaged to support the facility's development. The vote was expected to lose due to an uproar from a group of residents who opposed the complex's siting in their community. Without the tax abatement, the complex would have been delayed indefinitely.

STRATEGY:

We created a coalition of community leaders, business owners, residents, blue-collar workers, and other interested stakeholders who supported the project in the media and on-the-ground efforts. Instead of a large-scale plastics complex triggering local opposition, the media began to portray the complex as one that could provide stability to the working class community. Within days of our involvement, we were able to move a likely loss on the abatement vote to a vote postponement.

RESULTS:

The complex received the tax abatement due to DCI's ability to engage local allies and change the media narrative. Our campaign shifted coverage from a focus on local opposition to the important jobs that would be created for community members.

3 Defeating Industry-Threatening Ordinances

CHALLENGE:

A trade association's membership faced a threat to their industry from local jurisdictions. The association's members provide telephone directories and include those who sell advertising and who print and distribute the directories to communities. The print directories have become an easy target for ordinances that result in the drastic reduction or total elimination of phone directory distribution in cities and localities.

STRATEGY:

After a series of high-profile losses, the trade association partnered with DCI Group to develop a national coalition of small business owners, third-party organizations, and local elected officials to educate municipal decision makers about the benefits of the print directory in their community, as well as to show ways the industry could partner with local recycling committees to meet sustainability goals.

RESULTS:

DCI successfully stopped legislation in multiple localities that would have essentially eliminated directory distribution. In one Midwestern location, the city was considering a mandatory opt-out program. However, we identified the proper relationships on the city council and successfully delayed consideration of the rule. This delay allowed us to open a dialogue with the ordinance's sponsor and move the city council to dropping the proposal.

CASE STUDIES

Ballot Initiative

- 1 Defeating Burdensome and Expensive Energy Mandates
- 2 Preventing an Unprecedented Gambling Expansion
- 3 Keeping Commodity Transportation Routes Open

1 Defeating Burdensome and Expensive Energy Mandates

CHALLENGE:

In 2018 a California-based activist spent more than \$30 million promoting a ballot measure that would have imposed burdensome mandates on utilities in Arizona. Early surveys showed the measure was popular, with support from voters at 58% “yes” and opposition at 27% “no.”

STRATEGY:

We were retained by the “No on Prop 127” campaign to handle strategy, message development, and direct contact (mail and phones). We helped build a team with our client, their pollster, and a media firm to change the emphasis away from so-called green energy and focus it on higher utility bills and the impact on small business and consumers.

RESULTS:

The result was a total reversal of early polling, and Prop 127 went down in flames by a 31% to 69% margin. It was one of the more spectacular reversals on a ballot measure in Arizona state history.

2 Preventing an Unprecedented Gambling Expansion

CHALLENGE:


The Idaho Legislature revoked legislation that had allowed race tracks and simulcast locations to operate gambling machines known as historical horse racing (HHR) terminals. With no realistic method to legalize the machines through the legislature, proponents of the machines filed paperwork for a “Save Idaho Horse Racing” ballot initiative as a final attempt to get Idaho voters to legalize the machines.

STRATEGY:

DCI Group rapidly established a robust “no” campaign to educate voters on the dangers of the unprecedented expansion of gambling in Idaho. We defined the proposition as defective and deceptive and provided a platform for credible voices to question the motives of proponents. Our strategic plan included earned media outreach, digital targeting, television and radio advertising, and a direct mail and phone program.

RESULTS:

DCI Group successfully drove a wholesale shift in the narrative around the issue of HHR terminals, defeating the measure at the polls. We identified and recruited voices to help move the debate away from a seemingly unwinnable battle over horse racing to a discussion about gambling and slot machines.



3 Keeping Commodity Transportation Routes Open

CHALLENGE:

In the fall of 2016, environmentalist activists in Spokane submitted an initiative to make it illegal to move uncovered coal and oil by rail through the city's downtown area. Designated as Proposition 2, this initiative – which the city's hearing examiner had called potentially illegal and unenforceable – was problematic for numerous reasons. Spokane is a major rail route for many commodities, including coal and oil from states like Montana, Wyoming, and the Dakotas, destined for West Coast ports and refineries. Prop 2 would have essentially made this primary railway a “no transport” zone. It would also have set a terrible precedent for business development, investment, and for shippers of all commodities, while risking attention from extremist outside groups that could use this proposition as both an opportunity to infuse resources and as a model for them to escalate the fight in other communities throughout the state, region, and nation.

STRATEGY:

We launched and ran all facets of the citizen's ballot initiative called the Committee to Protect Spokane's Economy. We centered the campaign on protecting the city's jobs, economy, and tax dollars in urging a “no” vote on the initiative.

RESULTS:

After a rigorous 12-week campaign, Proposition 2 was successfully defeated. The “yes” vote received 42.54% with 18,530 votes and the “no” vote received 57.46% with 25,033 votes.

