

50765 9828

MEMORANDUM

1717 I STREET
SUITE B
SACRAMENTO
CALIFORNIA 95814
916-444-5701
TELECOPIER 916-444-0382

TO: David Townsend
FROM: Jeff Raimundo
Communications Director
DATE: November 30, 1988
RE: Press/Communications Final Report

The news media and communications program of the CAUTI campaign ultimately evolved into three distinctly separate phases -- all with the same goal of "levelling the playing field" in the free media debate:

- * Phase I, designed to educate skeptical, even hostile, news media about the valid case against the Tobacco Tax Initiative and to define the issues involved in the proposition before the proponents had an opportunity to do so.
- * Phase II, a proactive period in which CAUTI advanced the arguments against Proposition 99, kept the debate focused on our definition of the initiative and generated stories and editorials cast most favorably to our position.
- * Phase III, a reactive period in which CAUTI was required to rebut the aggressive news media efforts of Proposition 99 proponents.

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PHASE I (December 1987 - May 1988)

At the outset of the signature-gathering phase of the Proposition 99 campaign, our primary goal was to "level the playing field" with editors and reporters who had clearly indicated a bias against the tobacco industry and in favor of the Tobacco Tax Initiative. Our intention was to shift the press's hostility to neutrality, or at least an open-mindedness to our arguments.

Through our early one-on-one contacts, we were very successful in meeting that goal with virtually every major newspaper and broadcast news department in the state with the exception of the San Jose Mercury - News and the Long Beach Press - Telegram (both Knight-Ridder newspapers), which took a rigid stand against the tobacco industry in December, at the very beginning of the signature-gathering phase.

We found that most of the arguments developed by the campaign Strategy Team had a "bite" with our contacts, with something to appeal even to those who were strongly biased against us. Ultimately, we were able to generate at least philosophical sympathy for our side among many editorial writers and news reporters.

Press interest in the campaign remained very low until after our TV advertising campaign began. Nevertheless, while few stories or editorials were generated, we were able to make our arguments against Proposition 99 credible.

Recommendation

In future campaigns in California or elsewhere, the news media relations program should include an aggressive early-stage education program, as conducted during Phase I of this campaign, designed to establish contacts, credibility and balanced coverage among the media.

PHASE II (May - November 1988)

Following qualification of the initiative, the press/communications operation inaugurated a higher-profile proactive strategy designed to establish support for planned

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campaign broadcast advertising and to keep control of the themes of the debate over Proposition 99.

Initially, we enjoyed some success with our argument that the initiative was not a health issue, but a tax and fairness issue. That message was persuasive to many reporters and the general public -- although we found a strong "so what" sentiment in favor of punishing smokers and the tobacco industry no matter what the consequences.

In an effort to capture political ground before initiative sponsors were even in the battle, we planned a variety of theme-oriented press events to feature well-known, credible public figures to carry our opposition messages -- union leaders, teachers, law enforcement spokespersons, key elected officials, representatives of minority and poverty groups, etc.

However, significant surrogate support from non-industry allies never materialized. While many individuals and organizations in law enforcement, government and minority communities gave their nominal endorsement, none of them were willing to speak out publicly in support of the tobacco industry. Even our strongest perceived allies -- the Republican Party, the California Chamber of Commerce and the California Taxpayers Association -- refused to issue press releases or provide spokespersons for their organizations when requested to do so.

As a result, lacking non-industry "messengers" to communicate our issues to the public -- not even an "honorary chairman" for CAUTI -- the full proactive news media strategy could not be effectively implemented. This was an important setback for the campaign that ultimately helped to undermine its credibility and prevented the strong anti-Proposition 99 arguments from being fully aired.

On the other hand, campaign representatives -- chiefly Jeff Raimundo, Nancy Heffernan, Steve Heath and Kimberly Belsh-- enjoyed significant success in getting the CAUTI message out through radio and television talkshows and public affairs programs. But these were low-visibility avenues that, while important, could not overcome our invisibility on news programs and in the newspapers. And Proposition 99 sponsors were unrelenting in pointing out these spokespersons were "paid for by the tobacco industry."

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Recommendation

An aggressive proactive element, using credible surrogates for the tobacco industry, is essential. As anticipated, we found the tobacco industry is not an effective messenger for its own case in California. The industry must cement its relations with potential political allies, in part by educating them to the issues -- regressivity, crime, fairness, discrimination -- when circumstances similar to Proposition 99 are anticipated.

PHASE III (September - November 1988)

Phases II and III overlapped somewhat. The free media strategy was seriously impaired by massive publicity earlier in the year surrounding Surgeon General Koop's report on tobacco addiction and the Cipollone case.

The original campaign advertising strategy had been that CAUTI would control the debate and keep proponents off balance by pushing a specific theme for a short period; then moving on to another issue before initiative sponsors had time to regroup and respond effectively.

However, because public opinion polling indicated our crime advertising was moving sentiment against the initiative, the consensus of the Executive Committee and the Strategy Team was to stay with crime longer than anticipated.

That decision was made with the understanding that it might give the opposition further time to regroup and execute a counter-offensive. With Attorney General John Van de Kamp taking the lead, supporters mounted a vehement counterattack that included persuading two key law enforcement groups to rescind their endorsement of our opposition campaign.

Their success and our shaken credibility were attributable in part to California's lack of an organized crime tradition. Simply put, references to smuggling, crime families and black market cigarette sales are alien to Californians.

After Van de Kamp went on the attack, unrebutted by any major law enforcement figures, our credibility was undermined not only on our crime arguments, but also on the very conduct of our campaign and all other elements of it. Because we were

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unable to produce any surrogates to refute Attorney General John Van de Kamp, news reporters, already disturbed by their budding feeling that the tobacco industry might actually be right, quickly settled back to their more comfortable bias against the industry.

Once again, we were severely handicapped because we were left with only an industry mouthpiece, Jeff Raimundo, to issue an opposition statement to the press against the state's Health Director, Ken Kizer, and Attorney General Van de Kamp.

We enjoyed continued success in monitoring the proponents' press activities and responding quickly with creative arguments and rebuttals that diluted the promoters' potential domination of the news stories. But we were no longer in control of the agenda.

Recommendation

High risk strategies are part of any major campaign planning. In future circumstances similar to those involved in Proposition 99, however, the tobacco industry should avoid handing its opponents a major advantage by giving them too much time to mount an effective counterattack. Hard-hitting themes and messages such as the crime implications of tobacco tax increases can be quite effective. But we might have maintained better control of the debate by moving on to a new issue sooner. Had this been done, we still would have been able to return to crime if we had determined it to be an effective message.

COMMUNICATIONS/OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

In addition to news media relations, we played active roles in theme and message development, paid media, field activities, direct mail and other operations within the campaign. Following are some of the key communications activities undertaken by the press staff:

- * Prepared all written materials and information kits for use throughout the campaign.

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- * Addressed organizations or groups in speech or debate formats and provided written materials to groups such as California Chamber of Commerce Tax Policy Subcommittee, league of Women Voters, city council members and county supervisors throughout the state.
- * Worked with field office to prepare mass mailings to statewide associations, organizations, state and local elected officials, other field outreach.
- * Attended focus groups in Los Angeles and San Francisco to research attitudes and to apply them in free media interviews, etc., where possible.
- * Conducted press staff meetings or conference calls to discuss strategy; examined and identified need for hired spokespersons for statewide speakers bureau.
- * Wrote primary opposition argument and rebuttal for ballot; assisted in search for and met with possible signatories.
- * Held media training seminar with Michael Sheehan from Ogilvy & Mather Public Affairs, Washington, D.C.
- * Drafted half-dozen speeches tailor-made for particular audiences, pitching different angles; included in speakers kit.
- * Compiled and finalized argument supporting CAUTI contention that Proposition 99 will cause crime. Argument used in effort to persuade some electronic media to run our ads.
- * Briefed various tobacco company executives, growers, distributors on Proposition 99; helped maintain "voice" relaying same outreach message throughout campaign.
- * Prepared resolutions for state Republican Party, counties and cities.
- * Assisted in drafting newspapers advertisements for Hispanic and Black ads. Worked with minority representatives to massage copy.
- * Held briefing sessions periodically with all CAUTI press and field staff to review changes in advertising campaign, arguments, quotable turns of phrase.

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- * Edited and placed opinion editorials by key California economists.
- * Reviewed campaign disclosure statements and prepared remarks in anticipation of press inquiries.
- * Identified and hired Hispanic consultant to work with Ogilvy & Mather on Hispanic press, translate materials.

PRESS ACTIVITIES/CONTACTS

The press relations portion of our duties was by far the most demanding. The issue intensified as the days and weeks passed, and press attention to Proposition 99 took on a life of its own. A strong bias in the press against our effort and the tobacco industry in general made the job particularly challenging. Among other things, we:

- * Constructed master speakers bureau scheduling system, overseen by deputy in Townsend press operation. Involved tracking all engagements, both press and field related, gathering all advance information, determining best representative for our side according to audience make-up, region, program format (i.e., debate or speech).
- * Assembled materials for generic press kit; updated regularly.
- * Drafted letters requesting guest slot on television and radio talk shows. Sent out to all statewide media with press kit. Conducted follow-up calls.
- * Drafted letters to editorial editors of all daily newspapers requesting editorial board visits and, ideally, editorial endorsement against tobacco tax initiative. Conducted follow-up calls.
- * Prepared news conference schedule and planned press hits in conjunction with current "waves." Planned basic distribution to Capitol press corps, local outlets, Southern California electronic media, wire services.

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- * Drafted a variety of opinion editorials for distribution under various by-lines. Targeted to medium- and large-sized dailies, as well as weekly newspapers.
- * Compiled list of syndicated columnists; mailed press kits and letters.
- * Monitored press coverage of issue regularly; distributed clips to all campaign Staff, Strategy and Executive Committee members.
- * Appeared as guests opposite Yes side on television and radio talkshows throughout state regularly, either via telephone or in studio. Approximately 75 talkshows.
- * Conducted interviews on a daily basis with news media statewide. Approximately 300 interviews conducted.
- * Pointed out deceptive practices by Yes side in interviews and news releases, when possible. Attempted to prevent credibility bashing by other side.
- * Monitored Yes side press activities and news events; countered with news releases on another subject and managed to dilute tremendously their domination of the press.