

**SOUTH CAROLINA
INSIGHTS REVIEW**



2019 SOUTH CAROLINA INSIGHTS REVIEW

OUR GOAL

Ballast Research provides direct feedback from senior policymakers to government relations professionals, helping advocates make better use of policymakers' time and provide the resources most useful to those in government.

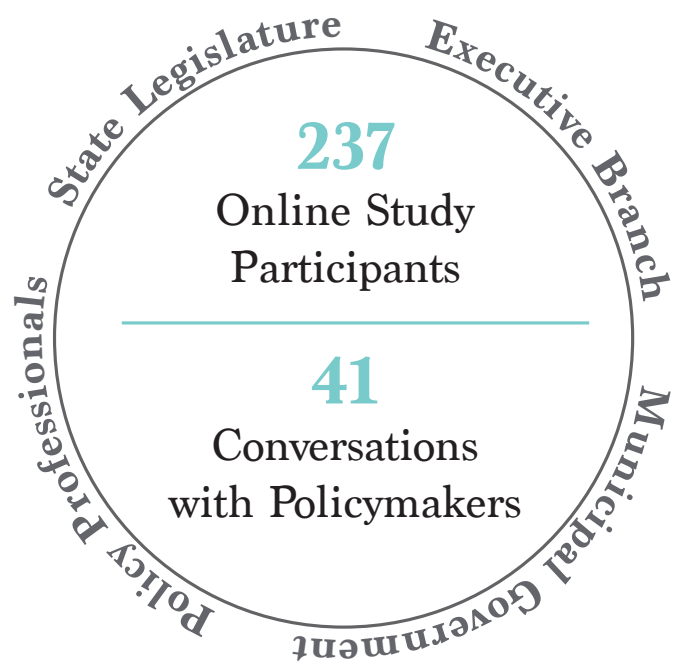
OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

This report summarizes our 2019 findings on best practices for advocacy in South Carolina, focusing specifically on building relationships and media. Our report concludes with a case study in education advocacy.

OUR PROMISE

Confidentiality

All participation in our research is confidential and not for attribution.



RESPONDENTS ON WHY THEY PARTICIPATE IN BALLAST'S RESEARCH

*"I think insight is so important, and I'm glad that I could lend something to what you're doing. **If we can help entities understand how to communicate better, perhaps we can fix a lot of the challenges we face.** But if we continue down this path of not communicating or listening to one another, it's just going to hurt all parties involved."*

-Policy Expert, Private Sector

"I'm always trying to increase the communication quality between the regulated community and the regulators. I think when we do a better job of that, we'll see better outcomes and better public policy being set. I only see this as a positive, so I'm happy to help."

-Senior Staff, Federal Executive Branch

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING: HOW WE RECOMMEND ADVOCATES ENGAGE WITH POLICYMAKERS

Policymakers emphasize that building relationships with them secures their trust and increases their familiarity with the issues that advocates want to address.

POLICYMAKERS WANT ADVOCATES WHO:



SHOW UP AND ARE INTENTIONAL ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS

"I believe you have to be there every day. And you have to have people on the ground. I think the most effective lobbyists are the ones who have built good relationships with members of the General Assembly."

-Senior Staff, Executive Branch, I



TELL BOTH SIDES OF THE STORY

"When you deal with lobbyists, what you're looking for is the upside and the downside of an issue. Most lobbyists only give you the upside. With lobbyists you can actually trust, you can ask them the downside and they'll tell you the truth."

-Senator, R



KNOW WHERE THEY STAND ON ISSUES BEFORE REACHING OUT

"It's all about forming relationships and communicating with people in government about what the important issues are. Good advocates know ahead of time where policymakers will stand on issues and whether it's worthwhile to try to pressure us or not."

-City Councilmember, R



MEET THEM IN THEIR COMMUNITIES

"Advocacy goes back to relationships and being in touch with the decision-makers not just in Columbia, but in their local districts, where they go to church, or at other local social activities."

-Agency Director, Executive Branch, I

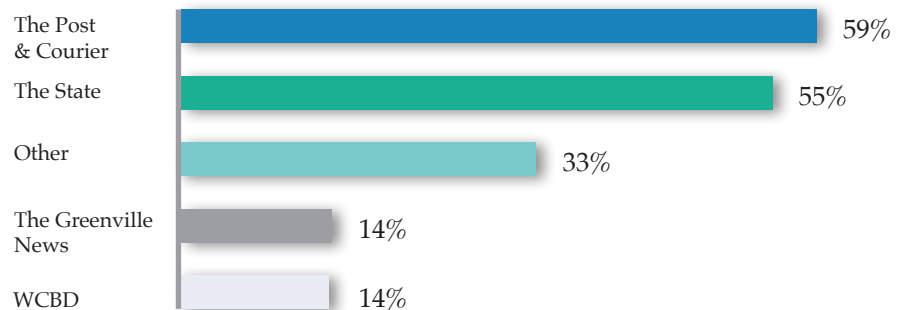
POLICYMAKERS EMPHASIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF A MULTI-PLATFORM APPROACH TO MEDIA

“I think the best advocacy is doing all of the above: sending emails, signing contracts to get on media, social media, and in-person conversations.” -Representative, D

We asked policymakers which media platforms they use most often. **Online News Websites (63%)** and **Social Media (53%)** stand out, but Television and Newspapers closely follow.



We also asked which local media outlets they usually turn to for their news. **The Post and Courier (59%)** and **The State (55%)** are the most consumed media outlets among our respondents.



WHILE MEDIA ALLOWS ADVOCATES TO REACH MULTIPLE POLICYMAKERS, RESPONDENTS NOTED THE LIMITATIONS OF PERSUASION THROUGH MEDIA.

*“When I read a story, I take it with a grain of salt. **There are two sides to every story.**” -Mayor, R*

*“This content in the media is paid for by specific organizations, and the ads are geared toward your lay citizen. **They may be providing correct information, but the way they're spinning it, I think, may lead people to draw false conclusions.**”*

-Manager of Economic Development, Executive Branch, R

OUR RECOMMENDATION TO ADVOCATES

- ✓ Use diverse media strategies that include online news media and social media to increase awareness about your work and issue areas.
- ✓ Engage policymakers more directly with emails, phone calls, and meetings to provide additional context and make persuasive arguments.

CASE STUDY: EDUCATION ADVOCACY

75% of respondents identified education as one of the most pressing concerns facing South Carolina.

Policymakers Spoke About Increased Advocacy by the Education Community After the Introduction of the 2019 South Carolina Education Reform Bill.

“The Education Reform Bill woke up the education community which normally doesn't come out. Once the bill came through, they got excited and came to the State House. Numbers were around 10,000 strong. They advocated against a lot of the issues in the bill that they didn't think was in the best interest of education.”

-Representative, R

IN OUR CONVERSATIONS WITH POLICYMAKERS, THEY IDENTIFIED SOME CHALLENGES FOR EDUCATORS-TURNED-ADVOCATES AND HOW EDUCATORS ADDRESSED THOSE CHALLENGES.

POLICYMAKERS CAUTIONED THAT TEACHING EXPERTISE DOES NOT NECESSARILY TRANSLATE TO EDUCATION POLICY EXPERTISE

“Many educators think that because they're good classroom teachers, they understand what it means to set statewide education policy. And they don't. You can talk to ten teachers and have a pretty clear picture of where the issues are in those classrooms, but that's a small part of cracking statewide education policy.”

-Representative, R

POLICYMAKERS HIGHLIGHTED THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EDUCATORS' GRASSROOTS ORGANIZING...

“I think their effectiveness comes from their grassroots organizing. Many good things came out of those conversations....”

-Senator, R

POLICYMAKERS PRAISED EDUCATORS FOR COLLABORATING WITH AND LEARNING FROM THEM ON EDUCATION POLICY

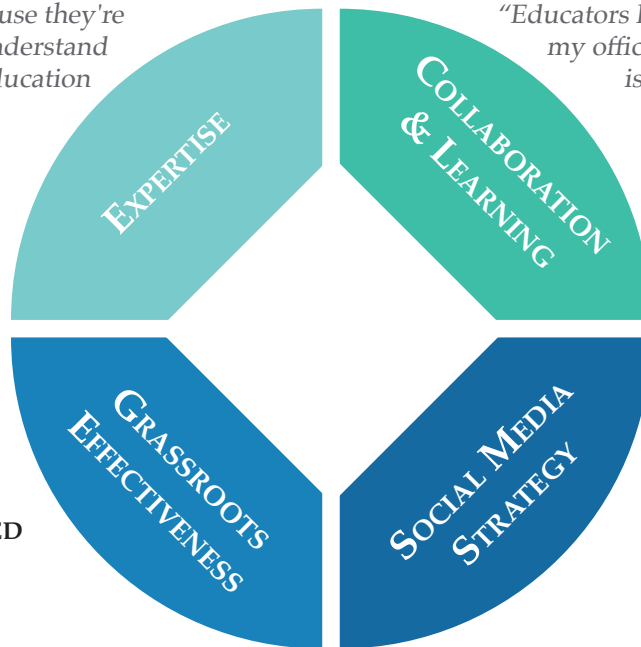
“Educators lobbying on the reform bill came to my office. They talked to me about various issues and I shared with them what they needed to do to get the full attention of the House and the Senate. That way when we talk about education reform, we have the right people at the table. And I believe the bill that we put up is really going to have an impact on education.”

-Representative, D

...BUT NOT ALL POLICYMAKERS WERE PERSUADED BY EDUCATORS' SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

“...Their media use was almost exclusively Twitter though, where there is a lot of fear and anger, and I think that was the ineffective part of their efforts.”

-Senator, R



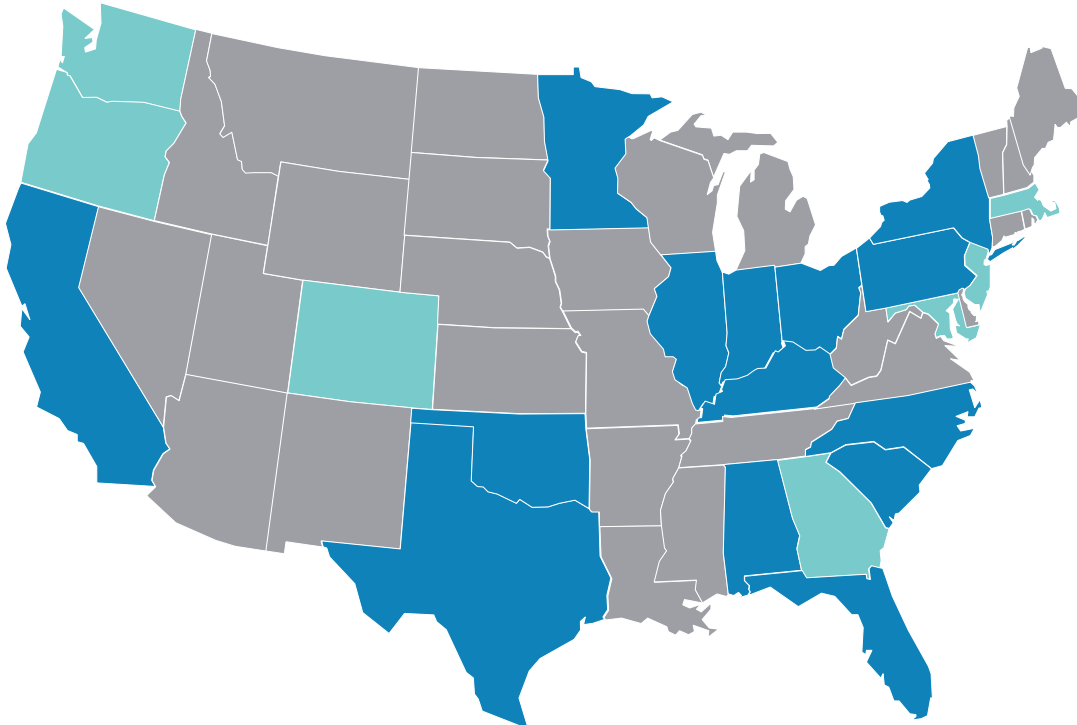


 **BALLAST**
RESEARCH

STATES INSIGHTS REVIEW

Ballast Research provides direct feedback from senior policymakers to government relations professionals, helping advocates make better use of policymakers' time and provide the resources most useful to those in government.

OUR PRESENCE



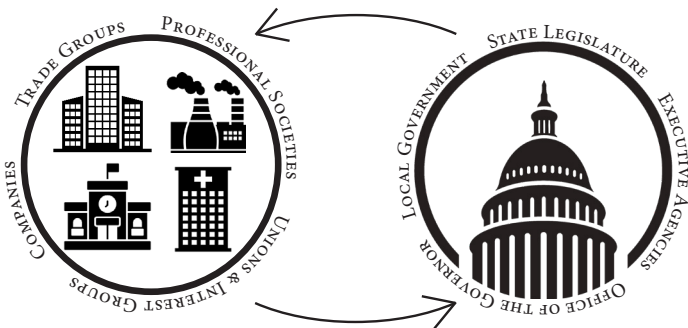
OUR PRESENCE

Ohio	New York
Texas	California
Illinois	Oklahoma
Florida	Minnesota
Indiana	Pennsylvania
Alabama	South Carolina
Kentucky	North Carolina

PROSPECT STATES

Oregon	New Jersey
Georgia	Washington
Colorado	Massachusetts
Maryland	

ABOUT BALLAST RESEARCH



Our clients are Fortune 500 companies, trade associations, and nonprofits looking to forge more productive partnerships with those in government. Each of our clients understands the value of policymakers' time and works with us to optimize every interaction. The result is more productive, mutually beneficial, and efficient engagement.

PARTICIPATE IN OUR RESEARCH

ONLINE: www.ballastresearch.com



EMAIL: states@ballastresearch.com

OUR PROMISE: ALL PARTICIPATION IN OUR RESEARCH IS CONFIDENTIAL AND NOT FOR ATTRIBUTION.

CREDITS

Principal Author

Mikayla Rooney

Assisting Author

Cameron Bronson

Senior Content Strategist

Allison Turnipseed

State Research Manager

Gabby Marzke

Sabiha Ozgur

Qualitative Research Manager

Matthew McCarthy

Quantitative Research Manager

Mackai Tapleshay

Head of Research

Michael Griffin

President

Michael Gottlieb

