

To: Jim Riesberg
From: Keystone Policy Center
Cc: Communications and Outreach Subcommittee
Date: November 30, 2015
Subject: Colorado Strategic Action Planning Group on Aging Media Memo

Summary

The Colorado Strategic Action Planning Group on Aging is collaboratively working to better understand the needs of the state's growing population of Coloradans aged 50 and above and to develop a comprehensive, long-term strategy. The Colorado Strategic Action Planning Group on Aging was created by the Colorado General Assembly through the passage of HB15-1033. Their work, as outlined in the legislation, will result in a comprehensive plan on aging through the year 2030. The report will provide state policymakers with data on Colorado's aging population as well as recommendations regarding public and private options for addressing the Centennial State's demographic future.

The following memo lays out a general press strategy and basic messaging for the Colorado Strategic Action Planning Group on Aging to ensure the public and policymakers understand the coalition's work and forward momentum.

Coupled with this memo, the Keystone Policy Center will develop a media pitch/distribution list for the Colorado Strategic Action Planning Group on Aging and its designated media representatives. That list, comprised of individual reporters who have covered the commission as well as reporters whose coverage areas include aging and related issues, will help communicate the group's progress to a statewide audience. Members of the Colorado Strategic Action Planning Group on Aging and its Communications and Outreach Subcommittee should feel free to supplement that list and amplify media outreach efforts with their own contacts at the local, regional, state, and national levels.

Media Roadmap/Strategy

The Colorado Strategic Action Planning Group on Aging's goal from a media perspective should be to ensure members of the press, public, and key influencers understand its ongoing work as well as the comprehensive and collaborative nature of its fact-finding and broader mission. Strategic media relations, including the pitching of stories and routine contact with reports, will ensure that the Colorado Strategic Action Planning Group on Aging is in the driver's seat in forming the narratives that will define its work for the broader public.

Ultimately, successful communications is built upon engaging stories, compelling statistics and timely hooks. Thus, the goal of the group and its staff should be to provide on-ramps for coverage utilizing one or more of these three criteria.

To accomplish this goal, the group needs to:

- Ensure reporters following its work know about upcoming meetings;
- Have the chairman or his designees reach out to members of the media ahead of, during (for those reporters present), and after each meeting to underscore the work being done and other newsworthy information;

- Invite lawmakers and other policymakers to attend meetings and prepare them to comment on the importance of the group, its work, and the progress being made;
- Highlight anecdotes of Coloradans and organizations whose examples illustrate the challenges, trends, and opportunities the group is addressing; and,
- Find ways to make the data, research, and other information the group uses accessible to reporters and relevant to their beats, interests, or upcoming newsworthy events/days (Veterans Day, Hispanic Heritage Month, etc.).

Helping reporters in the afore-mentioned fashions will build the Colorado Strategic Action Planning Group on Aging's credibility and strengthen the personal relationships that ultimately drive the news. The Communications and Outreach Subcommittee members and their organizations should work together to identify opportunities and engage with their peers to ensure they fully leverage all opportunities for earned media and public outreach.

These strategies also will ensure that when policymakers receive the Colorado Strategic Action Planning Group on Aging's periodic reports, reporters and interested members of the public will fully understand its backstory and be prepared to underscore its history of statewide outreach, meticulous research, careful analysis, and rigorous debate.

Media Protocols & Coordination

Colorado Strategic Action Planning Group on Aging Chairman Jim Riesberg shall be the primary spokesman and point of contact for all press requests. (Keystone Policy Center will flag press requests the Colorado Strategic Action Planning Group on Aging receives for him.) In the event the chairman determines another member of the Colorado Strategic Action Planning Group on Aging would be a more suitable spokesman, Keystone Policy Center will work to connect the press with that member of the group and her or his organization.

Other members of the Colorado Strategic Action Planning Group on Aging are encouraged to continue to engage with the press and public on their individual work surrounding Colorado and aging. The members also are encouraged to identify their affiliation with the Colorado Strategic Action Planning Group on Aging but should not speak on behalf of the group. This approach will help link the Colorado Strategic Action Planning Group on Aging to its members and raise awareness of its work. In the event a reporter does signal interest in the Colorado Strategic Action Planning Group on Aging's work, those requests should be referred to Keystone Policy Center and the chairman as quickly as possible.

Members of the Communications and Outreach Subcommittee also should highlight opportunities to leverage their social media and other platforms to amplify positive stories or examples through social media. Members of the Communications and Outreach Subcommittee should work together to coordinate amplifying content through their organizations' social media platforms (including the use of the hashtag #Plan4Aging) to spread the word about the Colorado Strategic Action Planning Group on Aging's work and the issues it is examining.

To help coordinate these efforts, the Colorado Strategic Action Planning Group on Aging should utilize the COAgingCommunicationsAndOutreachSubcommittee Google Group to flag press opportunities as well as items to highlight on social media. Members can do so by joining the

group (send a request to msaccone@keystone.org) and then send an email to the following address: coagingcommunicationsandoutreachsubcommittee@googlegroups.com. The subcommittee also should regularly meet, in person or via conference call, to delegate press outreach, coordinate on social media posts, and plan other messaging and public relations collaboration.

Framing

The Colorado Strategic Action Planning Group on Aging should be careful when framing its work and the challenges facing the state. All too often reporters and others can frame aging as a negative instead of an opportunity. For example, framing aging as part of how the state is changing for the better — and a demographic shift that is unlikely to change for generations to come — instead of as a “silver tsunami” or “gray tide.”

Core Messaging

- Colorado is in the midst of a tremendous demographic shift, with the number of Coloradans over 50 years of age expected to surge over the next two decades. These changes will present challenges for Colorado, but they also offer tremendous opportunities for our state.
- The Colorado Strategic Action Planning Group on Aging is working to study this pending demographic change and propose common-sense and comprehensive ways our state can prepare itself and serve as a model for other states in planning for aging.
- The group’s final recommendations — due to the Colorado General Assembly and Governor’s Office by November 2016 — will represent months of careful research, inclusive public outreach, and collaborative decision making.