

CLEARING THE AIR

A Tobacco Control Coalition Learns To Hold Together, Adapt and Win

June 6, 2008

Executive Summary

When Congress failed to pass a national tobacco control law in 1998, the focus of most public health efforts against smoking shifted to the states. While regrouping for a longer-term effort to enact federal legislation, public health organizations expanded efforts to enact smoking-prevention and –cessation programs, cigarette taxes, and smoke-free air laws on a state-by-state, and even, in some places, locality-by-locality basis.

This paper describes how an alliance of public health organizations in one state, Connecticut, took up that challenge and, against long odds, won a statewide ban on smoking in virtually all work places, including restaurants and bars (but not private clubs and the state’s two casinos).

The Connecticut group, known as the MATCH Coalition (for “Mobilize Against Tobacco for Children’s Health”), had started out, like many such alliances, as a loose confederation with little internal discipline and only modest influence in the General Assembly, the state’s legislature. When national sponsors of smoke-free efforts set out to fund the strongest state-level advocacy campaigns in the most promising environments, MATCH did not initially make the list. Few, if any, national observers considered Connecticut a likely place for major statewide progress against smoking in the near future.

That started to change in 2001, when MATCH members assembled a new leadership team, with an executive director, a communications consultant, and two professional lobbyists all drawn from the ranks of former members and staff of the General Assembly. Although some coalition members were uneasy hiring managers and advisers with little formal background in public health, a majority felt that it was time to try a new approach.

Along with the new leadership came a new organizational structure and internal discipline. Acting on advice from staff at a program called *SmokeLess States*, located at the American Medical Association and supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and at the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, another Robert Wood Johnson Foundation-funded organization, the group formally incorporated and gave the leaders and consultants freer rein to make tactical decisions, coordinate message and communications, and negotiate with lawmakers.

The group picked, as its sole initial priority, the repeal of a state law prohibiting cities and towns from passing their own smoke-free laws. (Connecticut has no county governments.) Admittedly, repealing the so-called “preemption law” would not, by

itself, have prevented any smoking or saved any lives. But it would have allowed the issue to move from the state legislature, where tobacco companies had been highly influential, to local forums where ordinary voters generally have more influence. Indeed, the preemption law had been passed at the express urging of the tobacco industry, which hoped it would shield them from the unruliness of municipal politics.

The coalition's campaign for "local control" turned out to be not only well-designed, disciplined, and politically astute, but exceptionally popular—especially with local politicians, who lined up by the dozens to promote the cause. Even local officials who opposed any change in smoking laws were eager to regain the right to determine what was best for their own towns and constituents.

Although the campaign failed to come to the floor of the House of Representatives in 2002, thanks to last-minute resistance from House leadership, MATCH won the leaders' agreement to bring the bill to a vote in the next year's session. By then, the legislation had accumulated a clear majority of members on record as supporting it. Unless the November 2002 elections substantially changed the makeup of the General Assembly, the bill seemed highly likely to succeed in 2003.

But then, in the run-up to the 2002 statewide elections, something unexpected happened: The groundswell of support for "local control" of smoking laws led many legislators to ask, "Why don't we just ban indoor smoking in workplaces statewide?" At first, this caused anxiety at MATCH. Many members feared that the legislators would indeed draft a statewide ban, but one that would be riddled with loopholes, unenforceable provisions, or other defects that would make for a weak law with too little benefit for public health.

Only as they began to canvass lawmakers in late 2002 did they realize that they had achieved more than they ever expected. They had majority support for a solid, enforceable ban on smoking in nearly all workplaces, including restaurants, bars, and most other entertainment venues.

Nonetheless, despite deft leadership from MATCH and a surprise assist from the state restaurant association, the bill nearly fell prey to an 11th-hour stealth amendment from the floor of the House. When that amendment was narrowly defeated, the bill passed easily, and Governor John Rowland signed it.

For advocates, organizers of coalitions, and funders of advocacy efforts, the story of the MATCH Coalition's success offers several lessons:

1. Aim a clear, constant message at the most influential audience. Sometimes, reaching the greatest possible number of people may be needlessly expensive and difficult. Penetrating the *right* audience, with a steady, persistent message can be less expensive and more efficient than spreading information more thinly among a wider group of people.
2. Get leaders who know the legislative process intimately—whether or not they are substantive experts. Substantive expertise is indispensable, but not necessarily among the people responsible for managing day-to-day tactical decisions.
3. Be careful to limit division in the ranks, and take extraordinary pains to get all members to speak with one voice, according to one strategy.

4. Leaders need to lead; don't expect to manage everything by committee.
5. Like coalition leaders, funders and intermediaries also need firsthand experience in the legislative process and in leading diverse alliances of public-interest groups.
6. Funders and intermediaries also need firsthand experience in the legislative process and in the leadership of public-interest coalitions.
7. The story of the Connecticut smoking ban is both an encouraging and a cautionary tale because it shows both the possibilities and limits to promoting a social cause.

Part I: Devolution

After a National Failure, the Tobacco Spotlight Shifts to States

Connecticut enacted its workplace smoking ban in the context of a long-running battle over tobacco policy which began with the states, shifted to the federal government and then came back to the states. The federal legislation to set historic limits on the advertising, manufacture, marketing and distribution of tobacco products across the United States died late on the afternoon of June 17, 1998 in two successive procedural votes in the U.S. Senate.

Within three weeks of the vote, the state attorneys general who had negotiated the original tobacco agreement were back at the bargaining table with industry lawyers, trying to forge an agreement that wouldn't require congressional approval. This time, however, there were many more attorneys general present, representing many more states than before—not all of them as committed to smoke-free objectives as the original plaintiffs had been.

Most believed that the lawsuit would never make it into court and would fare poorly if it did. The negotiations, in the view of many participants, were really just a way of determining how much the industry would pay to make the litigation, and the now much-weakened threat of regulations and restrictions, go away permanently.

In the end, in a deal reached with most of the states about five months after the federal vote, the industry agreed to pay the states annual sums amounting to \$246 billion over the first 25 years. This was called the Master Settlement Agreement.

Tobacco companies also accepted limited restrictions on the marketing of their products—though far weaker ones than were in the federal bill or even, for that matter, in the original negotiation that the bill was meant to enforce. The money would go to states as an unrestricted grant—meaning that, in all likelihood, many of them would use it for purposes unrelated to the control of smoking.

For different reasons, this outcome appealed to cash-strapped states and battle-weary tobacco companies in more or less equal measure. For public health observers, though, it only deepened the defeat they had suffered five months earlier.

Same Battle, New Front

Matt Myers of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids (created in 1994 with a \$20 million grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and \$10 million from the American Cancer Society, with smaller grants from a number of other public health groups) and most of his public-health colleagues knew that the spotlight had for now shifted to the states, where the next generation of crucial decisions about tobacco policy would almost certainly be made.

As soon as the lawyers' negotiations had resumed, Myers and the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids started contacting health advocates in every state, in hopes of mobilizing a new campaign—this time to ensure that the settlement money, whatever it turned out to be, would be used as much as possible to reduce smoking, and that other state policies would likewise work toward that end.

Because of legal constraints on the use of Foundation funds for lobbying, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation funds were restricted to organization, research, advertising and communications to educate the public and raise awareness of the issues. Funds to conduct lobbying by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids were raised from other sources.

"The public health community had learned a great deal from the federal fight," Myers says, "in terms of lobbying, media relations and grassroots advocacy skills. Now the challenge was about to get significantly harder." Although the national public health agencies had always worked with affiliates at the state level, "We had never before attempted to conduct what was really a nationwide campaign on a state-by-state basis.

"Early on, it became apparent that the Master Settlement Agreement [between the states and the tobacco companies] was likely not going to result in substantial funds dedicated to tobacco [control] unless we, in the public health community, mobilized as we had never done before. The Agreement would leave to the states the decision on how that money was to be spent. At that point, the effort to reduce smoking was going to depend in no small part on the public health community's ability to wage and sustain a sophisticated fight at the state and local levels."

In other words, it would require organizing or strengthening broad-based coalitions in states and localities all over the country, over periods of many months and years. "There were literally billions of dollars at stake," as Myers put it, and the high stakes meant that state-level groups would surely need and welcome some help in gearing up for the challenge. At least some of them, public health leaders thought, would see in this an opportunity to focus their own constituents' attention on the public and private dangers of smoking—in a way that no national legislation or litigation could have done.

The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids and other national groups began to compile research, gather experts, develop prototype advertising and public-information campaigns, and generally prepare the basic materials that they knew, from experience, state-level coalitions would need to take up the battle. Before 1998 was over, they had organized a three-day conference of advocates from all 50 states to discuss strategy and meet with national experts about how to organize a campaign, rally public support, reach out to policy-makers and participate in legislative hearings.

"It was designed," says Myers, "to develop an overall game plan so that advocates didn't have to start from zero or duplicate the research or advertising that others were doing—so they could mount truly independent but still well-coordinated campaigns."

To see where that effort has led, the remainder of this paper considers one such campaign in one state: Connecticut. That campaign was not, as it happens, aimed primarily at the spending of tobacco-settlement money. (The settlement-funds fight has proved winnable in only a minority of states, as this is written. Federal retrenchment, the 2000-2001 and 2008 economic downturns, and burgeoning costs for necessities like education and health care have left many states starved for general operating revenue, of which the tobacco windfall has furnished an often irresistible supply.)

In Connecticut's case, as in many others, the battle against underage smoking, nicotine addiction, and tobacco-related diseases has had to be waged not primarily with the proceeds of the 1998 tobacco negotiations, but with the age-old tools of ordinary public health policy-making: sound science and research, public support, persuasive use of media, skillful legislative draftsmanship and old-fashioned political arm-twisting.

These tools could plainly be used for any number of smoke-free objectives, depending on the opportunities that seemed most ripe in any given state: tobacco cessation and prevention programs, cigarette taxes, controls on sale and distribution of tobacco products, or clean indoor air laws. In Connecticut, it was this last item—prohibiting smoking in work places, including restaurants and bars—that rose to the top of the reformers' agenda. But before they could do anything about smoking laws, Connecticut's public health advocates found they first needed to get organized.

Part II: Mobilization

A State Coalition Comes to Life in Connecticut

As an example of the kind of state organization on which the national tobacco-control fight was about to devolve, Connecticut's MATCH Coalition was, in the late 1990s, somewhere between middling and low-end. The group, whose name stands for Mobilize Against Tobacco for Children's Health, was a loose, unincorporated collection of more than 100 public health, medical and civic organizations. It was based in West Hartford and administered by the Capital Area Substance Abuse Council, a private nonprofit organization established by the state legislature to reduce alcohol, tobacco and drug use. Although MATCH was occasionally effective at winning public notice—often with big civic events like an annual Youth Rally in Hartford, or with occasional protests or demonstrations—it enjoyed only modest influence, at best, in the corridors of the Connecticut General Assembly, the state's legislature.

Andrew Hysell, who was then the New England representative for the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, recalls the organization at the end of the 1990s as a patchwork assortment of "earnest, well-motivated people, but not terribly effective at getting laws passed." As a veteran of the intense national tobacco wars, Hysell at first saw little in the Connecticut tobacco-control movement that resembled the tough, disciplined campaign that had brought a national tobacco-control bill within a hair's breadth of passage.

"For a couple of years," he recalls, "when it came time to lobby for anything in Connecticut, I would go in [to state hearing rooms or conferences] and just see people sitting in a corner, not interacting with legislators at all, with no organized constituency, no real plan, just relying on the paid lobbyists to deliver their message. ... They weren't all working on the same goals; they didn't even all have the same legislative interests."

There was a reason that MATCH was something less than a lobbying dynamo, says Donna Grande, co-director of *SmokeLess States: National Tobacco Policy Initiative*, a program created and funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to support statewide efforts to reduce tobacco use. MATCH, she says, had done valuable work in

the 1990s to raise awareness of smoking issues. But because the state had not been part of a National Cancer Institute program known as ASSIST (for the American Stop Smoking Intervention Study), the staff of MATCH and its member groups never had an opportunity to hone the skills necessary to change policy at the state level.

In the 1990s, ASSIST invested \$114 million to help 17 states develop tobacco-control strategies, including enactment of clean indoor air laws, higher cigarette taxes and other policy changes to discourage smoking. In addition to money, ASSIST provided state coalitions with intensive training in bringing about policy change. Without that advantage, MATCH and its member groups naturally had difficulty shifting from the traditional focus on tobacco education and prevention efforts to the passage of legislation, according to Grande, who managed the ASSIST program before joining SmokeLess States.

The *SmokeLess States* program, which was based at the American Medical Association in Chicago from 1993 until its closure in 2004, made grants to statewide anti-tobacco coalitions to implement education, prevention and policy initiatives. In 1997, MATCH got a four-year *SmokeLess States* grant of just under \$1 million to help build up the organization's infrastructure, mobilize Connecticut residents and promote smoke-free homes.

However, in 2000, following the ending of ASSIST and the conclusion of the tobacco settlement agreement, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation narrowed the strategy of the *SmokeLess States* program from generalized education and prevention activities to activities focused on policy change. (Under federal law, none of the RWJF money itself could go for lobbying. Grantees raised matching funds from other sources to pay for their lobbying expenses.)

The *Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids*, based in Washington, seeks to change tobacco policy at the federal, state and local levels as well as countering the tobacco industry's marketing practices. With the conclusion of the master tobacco settlement agreement, the campaign was particularly interested in the enactment of state laws to reduce smoking and to use tobacco-settlement funds and other state resources for anti-smoking efforts.

As the staffs of both *SmokeLess States* and the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids intensified their work with state-level tobacco-control programs, they focused on states that showed the most promise for significant steps. Connecticut did not, as the 1990s ended, appear to be one of those states. There was no sign of movement in the General Assembly toward more funding for smoking prevention or cessation, stronger clean indoor air laws, or higher taxes on tobacco products. Nor was it clear, given the MATCH Coalition's limited influence on policy, how any such movement would get started.

Still, Connecticut was not without potential. It was a generally progressive state, highly protective of its quality of life. Its legislature had, years before, managed to pass one statewide clean indoor air act, albeit a bare-bones version. And despite some lack of focus, the MATCH Coalition did include nearly all of the state's most prestigious public health and medical groups, including the heart and lung associations, the cancer society, the Academy of Pediatricians, regional substance abuse councils, and local health directors across the state. What it lacked were strong leadership, discipline, and an effective plan for bringing about serious reductions in smoking and related diseases. Those missing assets might, with some

help and encouragement, be cultivated over time. So staff at the SmokeLess States program and the *Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids* made it a point to keep up a running conversation with MATCH and its members, urging more focus and a more deliberate battle plan. In the meantime, however, the prospect of significantly more money was not on the table.

Preemption: A Legal Technicality Takes Center Stage

As if to make Connecticut's case for major funding even thinner, there was virtually no prospect of real smoke-free gains anywhere in the state unless the General Assembly chose to act. While other state coalitions could aim their message at local governments as well as state legislatures, picking targets of opportunity as they emerged, a 1993 law had stripped Connecticut cities and towns of the right to pass any significant smoke-free ordinances of their own. When the legislature enacted its notably weak clean indoor air statute in 1993 (it forbade smoking only in government buildings, retail stores, hospitals, nursing homes, schools and child care centers), lawmakers attached a then-obscure technical provision that quickly became a political commonplace in tobacco law around the country: a "preemption" clause prohibiting stricter local rules.

As in the case of virtually all state preemption laws, Connecticut's provision was devised by the tobacco industry and its lobbyists, in exchange for withdrawing their opposition to the state's smoke-free bill. "By introducing preemptive statewide legislation," a Philip Morris representative wrote in 1994, "we can shift the battle away from the community level back to the state legislatures, where we are on stronger ground." As state after state passed preemption laws in the late 1980s and early 1990s, this seeming technicality proved to be a political windfall for the industry. By 1996, 31 states had denied their counties and municipalities any ability to control smoking, even as more than 1,000 localities passed smoking restrictions where they were permitted to do so.¹

Not only did preemption laws stifle local attempts to reduce smoking and protect residents from secondhand smoke, they confined all debate to forums in which industry groups had the upper hand. As Victor Crawford, a former tobacco lobbyist, put it, "all the health advocates... they're all local activists who run the little political organizations. They may live next door to the mayor, or the city councilman. ... So the Tobacco Institute and the tobacco companies' first priority has always been to preempt the field, preferably to put it all on the federal level, but if they can't do that, at least on the state level, because the health advocates can't compete with me on a state level."²

Connecticut was not the first state to enact a preemption clause (Florida was, in 1985), but the idea was still new enough in 1993 to catch smoke-free forces off guard. "No locality in Connecticut up to then had even tried to enact a smoking ban," a legislative staffer at the time recalls. "The whole clean indoor air movement was still really young at that point. We figured getting any kind of statewide smoke-free

¹ For a fuller description of preemption and its history and effects, see Robin Hobart, "Preemption: Taking the Local Out of Tobacco Control," Washington: The American Medical Association, 2003, available at: <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/5120.html>.

² A. Skolnik, "Cancer converts tobacco lobbyist: Victor L. Crawford goes on the record," *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 1995; 274:199-202, as quoted in Robin Hobart, *op cit.*, p. 1.

law was a victory, and something we could build on. The fact that we were giving away the store [with the preemption clause] didn't dawn on anyone till a few years later."

In the late 1990s, as national funders and smoke-free groups intensified their concentration on state-level coalitions, preemption quickly rose to the top tier of issues they hoped those coalitions would raise. For example, as the *Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids* started helping state forces draw up annual plans and targets for their policy work, it urged these groups to take a close look at trying to repeal preemption in the 31 states where it had been enacted, including Connecticut. Staff at the *SmokeLess States* program likewise trained a spotlight on preemption. At the urging of both the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids and *SmokeLess States*, Connecticut's MATCH Coalition applied for and received a 16-month, \$420,450 grant from *SmokeLess States* in March 2001, listing preemption as its prime target. The center then made a smaller companion grant to support MATCH's lobbying efforts. Other organizations also provided matching funds, including the American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, American Lung Association, Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and the pharmaceutical company Glaxo Welcome (now GlaxoSmithKline).

Although MATCH had raised earlier protests over the state's preemption law, the 2001 legislative session was the first time it had tried to organize a concentrated drive for repeal. Having received grants especially for the effort, along with yearlong technical support from Andrew Hysell of the *Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids* and Madeleine Solomon of *SmokeLess States*, the coalition began to show much greater determination and vigor for its work on preemption. Still, the 2001 campaign proved to be too scatter-shot to have much effect. Many of the public health organizations participating in MATCH had their own separate relationships with administrators and politicians in Hartford. Although, as a group, MATCH was not an especially powerful body, some of the individual members were eminent organizations run by public-health veterans. They had their own preferred styles of advocacy and communication, and their own priorities for legislative action—not all of which even included repealing preemption.

More than a few of them considered preemption an interesting legal and intellectual issue, but too far removed from their real priorities, like raising cigarette taxes, winning more funding for smoking cessation and prevention, or strengthening the statewide law on clean indoor air. None of those priorities, it must be acknowledged, had any great chance of passage in 2000 or 2001. And with different organizations pushing for different priorities, no single issue had come close to building the political head of steam necessary to clear all the legislative hurdles and become law.

Still, however vexing the internal factionalism at MATCH may have been, it was neither deep-seated nor fatal. MATCH was, after all, a coalition of organizations with a common commitment to combating smoking. Their diverging tactics and styles were not so much the result of an inability to work together as of a lack of firm leadership, artful consensus-building, and operational discipline. By the end of the 2001 legislative session, the group had seen three staff directors come and go in fewer than two years. With several fiercely independent organizations among its membership, and lacking any kind of formal organizational structure or stable staff of its own, MATCH was proving nearly impossible to govern or even coordinate. In terms of political influence or persuasiveness, its whole was still considerably less than the sum of its parts.

Building an Organization and a Strategy

As the members gathered in the summer of 2001 to pick yet another executive director and to dissect their recent failure to push a repeal of preemption, none of the coalition's troubles seemed likely to change. Only one candidate for the director's job seemed particularly different from past choices: 24-year old Kevin Graff, who had gone to work in the General Assembly straight out of college and was now executive aide to the Senate majority leader. Unlike the other people under consideration, who had backgrounds in public health or in nonprofit administration, Graff was by then—despite his youthfulness—a practiced Capitol insider who knew, he says, “a lot more about the Public Health Committee than I did about public health.”

For some MATCH members, trained and steeped in the culture of health care and advocacy, Graff was simply “not one of us.” Others, though, seemed to believe that the public health expertise around the MATCH table was more than sufficient; what they lacked was someone who knew how to move an issue from public support to credible legislation to a majority vote of the General Assembly. Among the people who held that view was the group's government-relations consultant, Judy Blei. A longtime Hartford lobbyist for progressive causes, Blei had weathered enough of the coalition's past legislative efforts to believe that the new leader had to be different—someone able to maneuver in the legislature, in the media and among the various constituency groups. Members who asked Hysell and Solomon for their views got a strong dose of the same message. Graff got the job and started work that September. Roughly four months remained until the start of the 2002 legislative session.

Hysell and Solomon, meanwhile, had a further piece of organizational advice for the coalition members as their new executive director was taking office. MATCH, they said, needed to cease being a free-form roundtable and become a separately incorporated nonprofit, with a governing board and a CEO who could speak with independent authority. They were far from the only people to take this view, but coming from key funders, their opinion carried additional weight.

For some members, though, the idea came as something of a shock. It became clear that this would be a considerably more provocative move than merely hiring a staff person from outside the public health fold. Now, as some participants saw it, MATCH would not only be removed from the direct control of Connecticut's established public health agencies, but would be set up as a kind of rival institution, a competitor for leadership, public stature and limited public health funds. When the proposal came formally before the coalition several months later, in the late spring of 2002, the debate was long and heated. In the end, the motion passed by only a couple of votes. It was a reminder to Kevin Graff: His diplomatic skills were going to be needed not just in the Capitol, but among his own members as well.

First, however, even before its organizational issues were settled, MATCH would have to start a four-month dash to assemble a leadership team, develop a message and plan a legislative strategy that would be more effective than the ones used in earlier sessions. For that, Graff necessarily relied on MATCH's legislative committee, chaired by a master of the state's lawmaking process: Assistant Attorney General Richard F. Kehoe, the special counsel for legislation in the state attorney general's office. The committee also included the government-relations staff of the larger organizations

that belong to MATCH, plus two contract lobbyists, of whom one was Judy Blei, the state's most prominent lobbyist for civic and public-interest groups. Because Blei was most often associated with causes favored by Democrats, she and others encouraged the committee to hire a Republican lobbying firm as well. They selected Levin, Powers, Brennan, and Shea, a firm whose principals included a former top aide to Republican Governor John G. Rowland.

Among Graff's first observations on the coalition's previous work was that "we had lost our way in media relations, both earned and paid." The coalition had been successful, at least intermittently, at attracting the attention of reporters around public protests or the occasional bold-but-doomed legislative proposal. But the resulting news coverage—known to publicity consultants as "earned" media—usually didn't last long and produced no noticeable shift in political momentum. "Paid" media—mass mailings, posters, public service announcements—were likewise respectable but uncoordinated and of little lasting effect.

So MATCH quickly issued a Request for Proposals for a new media consultant. In what would become typical of the legislative committee's—and Graff's—new operating philosophy, the consultant they chose in January 2002 was another well-connected Hartford insider: Jonathan Pelto, a former member of the General Assembly and now head of a communications firm called Impact Strategies.

"Overall," says Graff, "the critical shift [in communications] was going to be moving from *media* to *media advocacy*—not just getting attention, but using media in a way that would influence the legislative process. It couldn't be all over the map, it had to be targeted, it had to be our message, and it had to go straight to the people we wanted to hear it. For that, Jonathan's [political] experience was essential."

Even Graff's choice for an administrative aide led him to an inside-the-capital adept: Leah Stroman had previously worked for the Connecticut Institute for Municipal Studies, a policy think tank funded by the state. From that background, she came equipped with contacts all over state government. So almost from the day she started, Stroman could call a state agency or a member of the legislature, reach someone she knew, and get what she needed.

Next came the strategy itself. As with most of the group's decisions in this period, Graff's approach to legislative strategy for the 2002 session differed markedly from past practice. Worse, it demanded a discipline and unanimity from the group that had never existed—or even been contemplated—before. Henceforth, in Graff's vision, the campaign would be about preemption and only preemption.

Instead of simply including the issue among a long list of other causes favored by MATCH members, Graff gradually persuaded the group's legislative committee that it would need "to focus like a laser-beam" on repealing preemption—and not on anything else. Also encouraging this approach was the fact that the *SmokeLess States* grant supporting MATCH's operational budget was based on the premise that preemption would be the focus.

'The Dominant Issue'

Because it was neither sexy nor easy to explain, Graff argued, repealing preemption would need a complete, deliberate, persistent campaign, uncluttered with other issues. Up to that time, only one state, Maine, had ever repealed a preemption law.

And that was a much narrower provision than Connecticut's, limited only to certain rules about advertising.

By comparison, what MATCH was seeking to do would be historic. But it could also be the sort of issue on which public-interest groups frequently falter: eye-glazingly dull and technical in the eyes of most rank-and-file voters, but of surpassing importance to a few sophisticated and well-heeled interests—in this case, tobacco companies, their lobbyists, and the legislators who support them.

"We decided that the only shot we're going to have on repealing preemption," Graff recalls, "is if that's *the only* issue we're fighting for. We were going to have to hold a press conference saying that *the* dominant issue for tobacco advocates would be the repeal of preemption—not cessation promotion, not cigarette tax increases, not programs supported by the settlement fund. We were going to say, 'You have to support preemption repeal if you're going to be considered strong on our issues.'"

The campaign would have to walk a fine line. It would have to be firm and clear, but not combative or confrontational, as some unsuccessful MATCH efforts had been in the past. The message could not amount, in Graff's parody rendition, to the equivalent of "you're with us, or you're with the terrorists." Legislators would need to be persuaded that repealing preemption would help *them*, in their districts—that it would be a way of demonstrating a clear commitment to children's health, clean air, and the right of local governments to protect their citizens from secondhand smoke.

So in early 2002, MATCH turned to those very local governments for its first base of support. One by one, Graff and other coalition representatives persuaded mayors and first selectmen (the chairs of Connecticut's town councils) to write their state legislators asking for the right to discharge a fundamental duty of every elected official: to protect the health of constituents.

In February, stacks of mail started arriving in Hartford from city and town governments all over the state, all of them saying in effect what Salem First Selectman Peter F. Sielman wrote to his state senator: "I would like to express my support for returning home rule authority to municipalities so that they can deal with secondhand smoke issues at their own discretion."

"It was just an amazing idea," Hysell observed later. "Go to every mayor and town selectman and ask them to sign a petition asking that they be allowed to pass laws at the local level. Politically, that's how you do stuff: You find the people with something real at stake on your issue, and you make common cause with them. Local officials actually *do* like the idea of having more power. So [MATCH] got a constituency that legislators care about, and asked the legislators to pass a law *for them*. I've never heard of anyone in any state doing that."³

Within a month, the letter-writing campaign culminated in a March 5 legislative hearing on smoking and preemption. It was not the first time such a hearing had been held, but this time it was attended not just by the usual public health advocates and opponents from restaurant and tavern trade groups. This time the list of

³ Since the beginning of the MATCH campaign, coalitions in Louisiana and New Jersey have adopted what they have called "the Connecticut model" for successful efforts to repeal statewide preemption laws.

speakers included an assortment of local officials not professionally affiliated with either camp.

Even local officials who *opposed* smoking restrictions joined the anti-preemption campaign. "I'm always looking to find ways to get more local control," a town council member told the *New Haven Register* in the weeks before the hearing. "At this point, I don't think we need further restrictions on where people can smoke. But we should have the option. It's important for towns to have local control."⁴

One after another, in their testimony at the hearing, city and town officials repeated the phrase *local control* in describing why, whatever their opinion of smoking, they opposed preemption and wanted it repealed. Listening to the testimony and scanning the extensive press coverage the next day, Graff, Peltó, and several members of the legislative committee experienced a kind of revelation: "Wow!" Graff said, "That's the message! When the usual suspects like me were testifying, talking about the state's undue restrictions on local public health policy, and blah, blah, blah, you could see the legislators kind of shifting in their seats, thinking 'Here we go again.'

"But when the mayors and first selectmen spoke, they started perking up. ... The people who are going to have the most effect on legislators are the opinion leaders *in their districts*. In the mayors and first selectmen, we had a pool of prime opinion leaders. And their opinion was: We want *local control*. That was the key. There was our message."

Enlisting the Grass Roots

Next, the campaign would need to broaden outward, to rally the support of the general electorate. For that task, the compelling two-word sound bite, which had been so effective among politicians, would not be enough. Peltó and MATCH needed a *story*—a simple, dramatic, narrative answer to the question "What's broke, and why do we have to fix it?"

To stir a broader public, they believed it was important for people not to see the issue as just a turf war between state and local politicians, but as an effort to right a historic wrong. Citing Justice Louis Brandeis' 1913 maxim "sunlight is the best of disinfectants," Graff and Peltó set out to shine some light on the 1993 preemption maneuver, in which, as one direct mail advertisement put it, "The powerful tobacco lobbyists successfully prohibited cities and towns from regulating smoking" in places such as restaurants and bars.

"It is beyond ironic and, indeed, tragic," the ad went on, "that Connecticut municipalities can protect residents from the by-products of dog walking, but cannot protect their children from the deadly effects of breathing secondhand smoke."

The direct mail campaign was one part of a four-pronged approach to the general public on preemption. The second part was a pair of public service ads that began running on Connecticut television in the early spring, soon after the legislative hearing. Both presented an ominous scene in black and white: a restaurant so dense with cigarette smoke it made the Los Angeles smog cover look like springtime on the Riviera. At a table in the center of the room sits a young family—two nearly

⁴ Michelle Tuccitto, "Coalition Fires Up Antismoking Effort," *New Haven Register*, January 11, 2002, p. 1-A.

asphyxiated children hacking uncontrollably, flanked by increasingly desperate parents. The message in both cases stressed the hazards and annoyance of second hand smoke.

Because MATCH produced the ads itself, under Pelto's guidance, they were specific to Connecticut's history, and to the story about preemption and local control that was key to MATCH's message. What was most noteworthy about these ads, though, was not so much their *film noir* content as the way they were placed and how they were used.

Instead of airing them in prime time, which would have reached the largest audience but quickly used up MATCH's small budget for media buys, the coalition bought air time in and around the local news hour. That was the time when the greatest number of politicians would surely be watching.

The point of buying "news adjacency," says Graff, "wasn't primarily to shift gross public opinion, but to show the legislators that we were dead serious on this issue, and had the money to wage a serious campaign." The job of moving "gross public opinion," in fact, fell more heavily on the other three parts of the mass-marketing campaign: direct mail, grassroots organizing, and "earned media," otherwise known as news coverage.

The ad campaign represented an additional vote of confidence by *SmokeLess States* in the Connecticut effort. From a discretionary pot of money called the Special Opportunities Grant Fund, the program staff gave MATCH additional money—about \$150,000—to help pay for the advertising. As the name indicates, this special fund was to permit state coalitions to respond quickly to unforeseen opportunities to press for policy change—including running a public education campaign in conjunction with an upcoming legislative vote. Graff successfully argued this was just such a situation.

On the MATCH staff, the grassroots organizer was Aaron Dority, whose recently-completed college years had been spent among the youthful foot soldiers of the state's consumer and environmental movements, particularly the Connecticut Public Interest Research Group and the Connecticut Citizen Action Group.

At MATCH, Dority was responsible for orchestrating the outreach to local elected officials and, at the same time, coordinating member organizations in mobilizing their supporters around three other grassroots exercises: a letter-writing campaign to state officials, a flurry of lawn signs reading "Protect Our Kids From Tobacco," and on April 3, in the crucial final month of the legislative session, a giant National Kick Butts Day youth rally involving 1,100 young people on the steps of the Connecticut Capitol. In addition to working on the youth rally, Stroman, who had the title of program manager, developed support among church ministers, predominantly in African-American communities.

Among the member organizations, paid staff and volunteers were also busy drumming up support. For example, doctors, nurses and local health directors spent countless hours of volunteer time promoting the legislation. As with the carefully-timed Public Service Announcements (PSAs), all of these activities were aimed, not just at building public awareness, but more pointedly, at demonstrating to lawmakers that the move for preemption repeal was a "serious campaign" with broad voter support and staying power.

Reporters, meanwhile, were taking ample note of all of this political and grassroots activity—partly because the story that MATCH was telling had the kind of dramatic thrust that reporters normally find irresistible. The Jacobean drama that MATCH had spun around the “powerful tobacco lobbyists” and their stealthy 1993 coup was proving to be fodder not only for paid ads, but for the imagination of the capital press corps as well.

Newspapers covered the swelling support among local officials for “local control,” the appearance of the lawn signs, the Public Health Committee’s deliberations over the anti-preemption bill, and the approaching floor fight in the State House of Representatives. Most news stories closely mirrored MATCH’s version of the preemption history: “Lobbyists for the tobacco companies managed to strip local governments of the power to restrict smoking,” a typical story in the *Meriden Record-Journal* explained⁵.

Unfortunately, so enthusiastic was the coverage that, in one case, an especially fervent newspaper column may actually have helped to derail the whole campaign as the 2002 session headed into its final weeks.

Under the headline “A Night Lawmakers Are Expected to Remember,”⁶ *Hartford Courant* political columnist Michele Jacklin brought the drama of the “powerful tobacco lobbyists” up to date, with a description of a recent lobbyists’ party in the offices of Connecticut House Speaker Moira K. Lyons. The party was sponsored in part, Jacklin reported, by a lobbying firm representing tobacco giant Philip Morris. “We have only to look at State Ethics Commission reports,” Jacklin continued, “to see that the various cigarette manufacturers pay a small army of lobbyists upward of \$400,000 a year to fight efforts to curb smoking. ... Despite [Public Health] committee support, rumor has it that Lyons assured the tobacco lobbyists that the [anti-preemption] bill wouldn’t be voted on.” The column went on to cite MATCH as an authority on the bill’s merits, and quoted Kevin Graff personally.

Lyons vigorously disputed the account and even called a meeting of tobacco lobbyists to assert that she had made no such “assurances.” Yet, if Jacklin’s allegations were wrong and Lyons had not in fact promised to stymie the bill, the incendiary column may have given her reason to do so now. The mention of MATCH among the columnist’s sources would surely not go unnoticed in the speaker’s office. Within hours after the *Courant* hit the newsstands on April 3, Graff’s House contacts passed him the word: The speaker, they said, was furious.

Graff’s immediate reaction was regret that he had supported the column with an interview. He knew the piece hurt his cause—at least in the short run. In the long run, however, he came to see it as a positive, if unintended, stroke. Graff speculates that by questioning the speaker’s conduct, the column may have made her more sensitive to the public perception of her stand on tobacco issues—a sensitivity that eventually worked to MATCH’s benefit. What is certain is that, in time, the speaker moved from being a barrier to an asset.

⁵ Paul Hughes, “Smoke Gets in Their Aisles,” *The [Meriden, Conn.] Record-Journal*, May 3, 2002.

⁶ Michele Jacklin, “A Night Lawmakers Are Expected to Remember,” *The Hartford Courant*, April 3, 2002.

Setback, but Not Defeat

Even against the speaker's opposition, the bill in 2002 didn't go down without a fight. As it became clear that Lyons would prevent the Public Health Committee's anti-preemption bill from coming to a floor vote, state Representative Christopher S. Murphy (D-Southington) started circulating a petition to attach the measure as an amendment to some other public health bill. He quickly got 69 signatures in the 151-member House—a formidable signal, even to a steadfastly opposed speaker. The president pro tem and majority leader of the Connecticut Senate both indicated their support of the measure—a good indication that the upper house stood ready to pass it.

But with the speaker still adamantly opposed and the end of the legislative session looming, Lyons and Murphy worked out a deal: The bill to repeal preemption would evaporate in 2002, but the speaker would allow it to go forward in 2003. As the session ended at the beginning of May, MATCH went home with no bill, but with a clear mandate for the next year's session. In July, it received another grant from the *SmokeLess States* program—\$561,122 over two years—to continue building the momentum for preemption repeal. Again, the *Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids* and other organizations provided matching funds.

The first challenge, therefore, was to maintain and increase grassroots support while continuing to pursue written endorsements from local officials. Throughout the previous legislative session, Dority and several members of MATCH had compiled a Petition to Protect Connecticut Kids, featuring the signatures of local politicians and public health officers. It had nearly 100 signatories by the time the bill died in May 2002, and MATCH members and volunteers were continuing to press for more throughout the summer. Meanwhile, 2002 was an election year. So as soon as the legislative session was over in May, MATCH's attention turned to candidate endorsements for the General Assembly.

The MATCH legislative committee started by drafting a written candidate questionnaire on which endorsement decisions would partly be based. The purpose wasn't mainly to gauge candidates' views on tobacco (most of which were already known), but to get those views in writing. A subtler purpose was to remind politicians—even those who were certain of re-election—that the smoke-free forces were alive and well, and readying a major drive for the next session.

In drafting the questionnaire, however, lingering disputes among the MATCH members began to resurface. Many members had been impatient with the exclusive focus on preemption from the very beginning. To a few veteran members of the coalition, repealing preemption would be little more than a procedural victory and, in some members' eyes, would only lead to years more work, fighting smoke-free skirmishes in 169 local governments all over the state. Now that legislators were showing an inclination to take action on tobacco, they argued, why not shift the focus to strengthening the statewide smoke-free law?

Others, including Graff and Hysell, argued just as strongly that this would be exactly the wrong time to shift focus. First, the "local control" message was proving remarkably popular and durable. Going after a statewide ban on smoking would, at best, amount to abandoning the principle of local control. At worst, the result might

well be a statewide ban that was considerably weaker than MATCH members wanted—and weaker than the ordinances that some localities would otherwise pass.

The point of the questionnaire and the candidate endorsements, after all, was to show that the smoke-free forces were unified and determined, and that candidates could not escape taking a position on “our” issue. Introduce multiple issues, and you offer candidates a chance to divide and wobble between them. And worse, you give the impression that there is no longer a single, coherent drive behind one piece of legislation.

In the end, the latter view prevailed. The minutes of the committee’s September 6, 2002, meeting reported that “the questionnaire would consist of a question about the dangers of secondhand smoke, a question as to whether the candidate supports or opposes local regulation... and, if a supporter, would they co-sponsor legislation.” The minutes did not reflect that the decision had been far from unanimous, and that the question remained, at least in some members’ minds, unsettled.

Indeed, from this point forward, the issue of legislative focus was a matter of contention—and sometimes heatedly so—within MATCH. Graff was concerned enough to seek outside advice on how better to develop consensus. The discord was also strong enough to get the attention of the *SmokeLess States* staff. Kitty Jerome, who succeeded Solomon in summer 2002 as the program’s grant liaison officer for the northeast region, says internal dissent and poor communications demanded significant attention from her and others seeking to assist the legislative effort.

Meanwhile, as responses to the questionnaires were coming in, Jonathan Pelto’s firm began conducting a statewide public opinion poll to gauge voters’ feelings about smoking and preemption. On October 11, a little over three weeks before the election, MATCH released the results: 73 percent of Connecticut residents supported restoring local authority over indoor air quality. And 93 percent were in favor of doing more to protect against secondhand smoke.

Throughout the fall campaign, Dority and a phalanx of volunteers fanned out to attend candidate forums and to ask politicians publicly about their positions on smoking and preemption. Every volunteer went armed with sample questions, developed by MATCH, that they could pose to the candidates, along with follow-up questions if the answers weren’t clear. People throughout the state who had contacted MATCH or its members offering support were called for help—they attended political forums, wrote or called candidates, and sent letters to newspaper editors. The issue was everywhere, and no one running for legislative office could dodge it for long.

Part III: Moving Target

A Sudden Shift in Goals Brings Success Within Reach

In the end, the 2002 elections produced no profound change in the makeup of the General Assembly, but the change in one seat, for Connecticut’s 34th Senate district, proved to be a big step forward for MATCH. Then incumbent Senator Brian McDermott, a Democrat from Wallingford, had been the Senate’s most vocal

opponent of smoke-free laws. His challenger, Republican Len Fasano, had used McDermott's pro-smoking record against him in the campaign, and had responded to MATCH's candidate survey with strong support for repealing preemption. Fasano scored an upset, thus removing what some insiders considered the Senate's single greatest obstacle to smoke-free legislation.

Among the returning members of both houses, it was clear that support for repealing preemption would again be formidable. Judging from the questionnaires and public statements, there was sizable backing for a repeal bill, including enthusiastic support from many senior members. Yet one change in the makeup of the legislature looked potentially troublesome.

Representative Chris Murphy, who had championed the preemption bill in the House and won a commitment from the speaker to bring it to a vote in 2003, was no longer a member of that body. Murphy had won his bid for the state Senate—a step up for him, but for MATCH it amounted to the loss of one influential representative who would now be starting over as a freshman senator.

"By the grace of God," says Graff, the trade turned out to be a favorable one. "They made him chair of the Public Health Committee. So, now we had a strong ally in exactly the right place to advance our legislation in the Senate." There was, however, still one problem with Murphy's rise to the upper house: Speaker Moira Lyons had made her commitment to *Representative* Murphy when he was a member of her chamber. Now that he was no longer there, Graff wondered, "How does he hold her to that commitment?"

There was yet one other surprise on the way from Senator-elect Murphy. Over the course of the previous spring and summer, as he witnessed the surge of legislative support for a smoke-free measure, he had begun to have some of the same thoughts as the dissident members of the MATCH Coalition: If this idea is so popular, why not just go for the whole prize, and enact stronger restrictions on indoor smoking statewide? When the elections were over, and planning for the next legislative session got under way, Murphy began preparing two bills: one to repeal preemption, and the other to strengthen smoking laws statewide. MATCH's "laser-like" focus was increasingly in danger of splitting in two.

A third smoking-related issue nearly made it a three-way split. In the midst of a worsening economy and falling state revenues, pressure had mounted for higher cigarette taxes. MATCH naturally supported the move, but pressing for three smoke-free measures at once would have hopelessly diluted the advocates' message. Because the tax increase was considered likely anyway, the legislative committee of MATCH decided MATCH would hold its fire on the issue and concentrate on clean indoor air and preemption. Indeed, the legislature had already raised the cigarette tax in 2002 (and would do so again in 2003), giving Connecticut one of the highest rates in the nation.

A Two-Part Message

Within two weeks after the elections, at a November meeting of the MATCH legislative committee, the issue of backing a statewide smoking ban came up once again, as it had several times over the fall. With Murphy determined to introduce the measure, members argued, how could MATCH possibly oppose it? Graff and others reiterated their concern that any smoke-free law that could win a majority in the

General Assembly would probably be much weaker than MATCH or its members would like. (He soon had persuasive evidence to support this point of view: Although Murphy's first draft would have extended statewide smoking restrictions to restaurants for the first time, it allowed exceptions for smoking areas and bars and other loopholes that many public health groups opposed. And it didn't apply to workplaces other than restaurants.)

Still, Graff had to concede, the other members had a largely irrefutable point: If Murphy came up with an *acceptable* statewide clean indoor air bill, applied to all workplaces and without significant loopholes, MATCH would be foolish to oppose it. The problem was, this was all still a big "if" and even an excellent bill from Senator Murphy could easily be watered down in the legislature before being passed.

MATCH would therefore have no choice but to complicate its once-simple, clear message with a two-part alternative, which the legislative committee adopted on November 14, 2002: Publicly, MATCH continued to call for the repeal of preemption as "*the dominant issue.*" But privately it would signal openness to a statewide smoking ban, provided the terms were sufficiently wide-reaching and strict.

As for the speaker of the House, she proved true to her word. On January 21, she joined Murphy at a press conference to announce their joint support for smoke-free legislation, as she had promised to do nine months earlier. In response to questions, both lawmakers spoke favorably of repealing preemption, but also of the possibility of a statewide smoke-free law.

In her remarks at the press conference, in fact, Speaker Lyons made clear that she would prefer the latter approach, rather than face what she described as a "patchwork quilt" of individual local smoking laws all over the state. The speaker was evidently sincere in that position, but Graff feared that other members might be all too eager to follow her for the wrong reasons. Some opponents of strong smoke-free laws, he suspected, might sign on to a statewide bill, betting that only a weak version would actually pass both houses. In that case, preemption would be preserved and all stricter measures would be safely off the table.

To prevent that from happening, Graff explains, "We continued to negotiate with Chris Murphy behind closed doors" over the form and scope of a statewide smoking ban. "Murphy would say, 'Let's do it this way,' and we'd say 'No,' and explain our reasons. He'd try a different approach, always trying to calculate what he could get passed, and we'd say, 'Not quite, but better,' and it went on like that for quite a while. ... We knew of statewide bans in other states that were not acceptable to us. And the notion of not covering all workplaces was acceptable to a lot of folks, but not to us.

"It would have been very easy, at that point, for people to put together a weak bill that just gave up a lot of important protections from secondhand smoke, but still let legislators go home saying, 'We did something big on tobacco.' That would have been a big loss for us because we probably wouldn't get a second shot after that. Chris Murphy understood that, and he worked with us."

By early in the 2003 session, Murphy and MATCH had devised a bill banning smoking in virtually all workplaces statewide, including restaurants and bars. Whether it could pass the General Assembly in that form, however, was still a wide-open question.

The odds were still not good enough to justify a change of focus from MATCH's top priority: preemption.

By the beginning of 2003, the Petition to Protect Connecticut Kids, with its continued emphasis on local control, was well-past the 100-signature mark and still growing. MATCH applied for and received a second Special Opportunities Grant of about \$150,000 from *SmokeLess States* to support a new series of public service ads on local television in January and February 2003, as the legislative session was getting under way. The ads were adapted from national materials developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and customized for Connecticut. All of these preparations, and the growing momentum among local officials and grassroots voters, were well-noted in the General Assembly as members arrived for the opening of their 2003 session.

When the preliminary hearings on smoke-free proposals began in February, there were two bills under discussion: Murphy's statewide smoking ban, and the repeal of preemption. Walking a fine line, MATCH kept its support for the statewide ban largely under the radar, insisting that local control—putting an end to preemption—was still the order of the day. Again, the parade of mayors, selectmen, and local public health officials came forward to testify against preemption. This time, among the visiting dignitaries was Matt Myers of the *Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids*, who told lawmakers that whatever they decided to do about a statewide smoking ban, repealing preemption was still essential.

The witness who got the most attention was a high school student, Walter Kerr, who had been working with the MATCH staff on grassroots development. Although a teenager, Kerr was so articulate that he drew a barrage of critical questions from one legislator who later said he thought he was confronting a paid MATCH lobbyist or staffer. (For his efforts to mobilize Connecticut teens, the *Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids* later named Kerr its 2003 National Youth Advocate of the Year.) Even without a "laser-like focus," MATCH had managed to keep the hearings aimed mainly at its "dominant issue," even as the rumblings for a statewide smoke-free law grew louder.

Opponents and Allies

In earlier legislative sessions, throughout the 2002 election, and up through the preliminary legislative hearing in 2003, the most public, organized opposition to the repeal of preemption had come not from the tobacco companies, but from state business owners, especially the influential Connecticut Restaurant Association. Whatever their opinions about smoking—and they were far from uniform—restaurateurs generally dreaded the prospect of separate smoking ordinances in every city and town.

MATCH and other smoke-free groups tried to reassure them with evidence that smoking restrictions typically don't harm business. No matter: Most restaurant owners did not want to face the risk that their competitors in a neighboring town might take business away from them, simply because the other town had more favorable smoking laws. The "patchwork quilt" that troubled Speaker Lyons left many Restaurant Association leaders in a panic.

Yet, by the time Murphy's Public Health Committee reported on Senate Bill 578, repealing preemption, with big majorities in both houses on record as supporting it, it was beginning to seem as if the "patchwork quilt" would soon be a reality.

Remarkably, despite Murphy's strong public position on smoking issues, he retained considerable credibility with business groups.

Throughout the process of hearings and bill-drafting, he had been careful to stay in steady communication not only with public health groups but also with the Restaurant Association. Within two weeks of the Public Health Committee vote, Murphy was quietly admonishing industry lobbyists: If you don't want 169 separate local smoking ordinances, it's time to lend your support to a statewide smoking ban. "The train," one observer quotes Murphy as saying, "is leaving the station."

As the train picked up steam, opponents of the preemption bill in the General Assembly began to sharpen their attacks, and increasingly to aim their opposition directly at MATCH and its member organizations. Why, opponents began asking, was MATCH insisting on the repeal of preemption rather than backing a simpler statewide ban?

Soon Graff started hearing rumors that MATCH supposedly had ulterior motives—that it was, in effect, less interested in reducing smoking than in creating political mayhem. The real issue, opponents were suggesting, was money. They alleged that public health groups actually *wanted* the mess and confusion of a "patchwork quilt" so that they could continue to raise foundation money for years, waging battle after battle in town halls and city councils, one after another. Even staff members in Senator Murphy's office had heard these rumors and wanted to know from Graff whether there was any truth to them.

"The message was getting out broadly within the legislature," Graff recalls. "It actually feeds into the legislative way of thinking: *Why would folks prefer the town-by-town approach? It must be self-interest. It must be good for their business!* Whereas, in reality, we actually had people internally [at MATCH] saying, 'This is going to be a nightmare, going town by town.'"

Whatever effect these rumors might have had was short-lived. By mid-April, it was becoming increasingly plausible that the legislature might truly be prepared to pass a uniform, statewide smoking ban that MATCH could endorse. For one thing, the Restaurant Association, after a long and sometimes heated deliberation, had privately made it clear to Murphy that they would prefer a statewide ban to the repeal of preemption. But more significantly, they added that they would demand a *strong, far-reaching* bill with few or no exceptions—exactly the kind of bill MATCH was insisting on.

The restaurateurs rejected the weaker approach that had been proposed in late 2002, aimed primarily at restaurants and exempting bars and other kinds of businesses. For the restaurant industry, town-by-town smoking policies would be disastrous, but smoking laws that affected only restaurants and gave a free pass to other hospitality businesses would be even worse. Association leaders didn't even want exemptions for designated smoking areas in restaurants, because that would disadvantage some of their members—the ones with small or inflexible space, where creating a separate smoke-free area would be costly or impossible.

Speaker Moira Lyons had already signaled her preference for statewide smoking restrictions rather than a "patchwork quilt," and that view had only grown stronger as repeal of preemption made its way to the floor of the House. Unlike the restaurant owners, she had no public preference for one kind of ban over another. She did,

however, lend her considerable influence to the idea of some kind of statewide ban rather than repealing preemption, and other members clearly took notice.

MATCH Again Adjusts Its Message

Amid all these pressures for a statewide ban, Graff, lobbyist Judy Blei, and other members of the MATCH legislative committee warily began canvassing lawmakers to see if there were enough votes for a genuinely acceptable bill. By now, members of the MATCH legislative committee overwhelmingly supported switching from preemption to a statewide smoke-free law. Some, in fact, were lobbying for the statewide law despite the coalition agreement to push only preemption.

Graff, however, still feared that they could be prematurely swept away by it, and end up with a bill riddled with exemptions. Yet much to his surprise, when Blei compiled the various vote counts, they seemed to have a workable majority for a strong, almost airtight bill that Chris Murphy had recently gotten through the Public Health Committee.

The legislation, if it became law, required all indoor workplaces with five or more employees and all restaurants and bars regardless of the number of workers to be smoke-free. Private clubs and fraternal benefit societies that existed at the time of passage (including Moose lodges and VFW halls) were exempt from the smoking ban. Also exempt were the state's two large Indian-owned casinos, which are legally sovereign territory. Non-restaurant and non-bar employers with fewer than five workers would have to provide a smoke-free work space to any employee who requested one.

"Most of [the prospective supporters of such a bill] were committed to it on principle," Graff discovered. "But some were just taking that position to play a political game—believing that no strong statewide ban would ever really happen, so this could be a way to appear to be a smoke-free advocate without actually having to pass a law." But whatever the level of sincerity, the votes added up to a majority. Armed with a solid vote count, MATCH now felt emboldened to support the strong statewide smoking ban that Chris Murphy and others had drafted.

Once Graff and Blei reported their tally to the legislative committee, MATCH effectively switched the emphasis in a new two-part message. Instead of saying, "We insist on repealing preemption unless the legislature passes a truly acceptable ban," the message now became, "We support the current proposal for a statewide ban, but we'll insist on repealing preemption if the current bill is watered down."

The switch wasn't without its political risks. With the new message, the broad appeal of "local control" would be lost, in favor of a more politically contentious (though scientifically solid) proposition: that smoking kills, and the state has a duty to save lives. This new message was, of course, closer to the true beliefs of MATCH members, and a far more energizing principle around which to rally, at least for those who shared the members' principles. And while it lacked the nonpartisan ring of "local control," it was, in its way, both purer and simpler to understand. The new message was aimed not at a legal irregularity, but at a threat to life and health.

Events outside the state may have helped influence the shift in focus. Tobacco control forces in New York City and Boston were at the time mounting strong and successful campaigns to enact their own indoor smoking bans, garnering media

attention that no doubt helped make the idea of a no-smoking law in Connecticut seem less controversial than it might have otherwise. Also, Delaware had already passed a landmark clean indoor air law that covered all work places, including bars and casinos, and simultaneously repealed preemption.

The final element that would likely move the strong statewide ban past the finish line would be the public support of the Restaurant Association. Up to this point, the trade group had made its views known to Chris Murphy in private, and had quietly stopped lobbying against the ban.

But early one Friday afternoon in mid-April, a MATCH colleague phoned Kevin Graff to say that, earlier that day, Simon A. Flynn, President of the Restaurant Association, had been on the radio acknowledging that the association supported the statewide smoking ban. It was the association's first public statement to that effect, as far as anyone at MATCH knew. Graff didn't know Flynn personally, though they had debated each other at a few public forums and traded occasional barbs in the press. "We had never spoken to one another directly," Graff recalls, "in any constructive way." Nonetheless, when word of Flynn's radio remarks reached the MATCH offices, Graff immediately reached for the phone and dialed Flynn.

Says Graff: "His office was in Glastonbury, Connecticut, about a mile away from where I live. So on my way home that afternoon, I stopped at his office. We agreed it would be a private meeting. I shared it with our lobbyist and a couple of other folks, but not with the rest of the coalition. When I got there, he and I talked briefly about jointly sending out a press release saying, 'The MATCH Coalition and the Restaurant Association Join Forces to Promote a Statewide Ban,' and 'Restaurant Association Reverses Years of Opposition,' because all of that was real news."

Flynn, himself a non-smoker, saw the announcement as an opportunity to portray his membership as concerned about their customers' health, and also as a way of showing members that their association was standing firm for a bill that would not disadvantage restaurants in comparison with bars, cafés or other entertainment venues. Graff was ready with his media contact list. The announcement would unquestionably be top local news, both print and broadcast, throughout the state.

But for the association's board of directors, the issue was a minefield. The decision to back the strong smoke-free bill had only narrowly been approved by a deeply divided board. When Flynn presented the joint announcement idea to the board's chairman, he got a quick, unequivocal *No*. He called Graff back the following Monday and said, "Kevin, I'm out. If members of the press call me, I'll talk to them. But I'm not going to be making any announcement."

By now, there was too much at stake for Graff to leave it at that. Using the limited opening Flynn had given him ("If members of the press call me, I'll talk to them"), Graff took a dive into deep water: "I just told our media consultants to send it out anyway. We put out a press release: 'Restaurant Association and Anti-smoking Groups Join Together In Support of Strong Statewide Smoking Ban.' I didn't use their logo or letterhead, but I put [Flynn's] name and phone number on it. And the media did call him. He and I never really talked about it afterward." Jerome, the *SmokeLess States* staffer overseeing the MATCH grant, was not privy to the tactic at the time and was critical of it later. Graff, however, says there was no negative fallout from the move as far as he knows.

With the most powerful industry group now publicly behind the bill, the Connecticut Senate passed the strong statewide ban two days later, by a lopsided vote of 26 to 7, long before the end-of-session crunch when most bills normally come to a vote. There remained only two more steps: approval in the House, where poorer and blue-collar districts have more influence and are more unfriendly toward smoking bans, and the signature of Governor Rowland, a cigar aficionado who had taken several opportunities to express his distaste for the bill.

Endgame: Echoes of 1998

Nearly a week had passed when Speaker Moira Lyons called the MATCH bill for a vote in the House of Representatives. By that time, a number of amendments were in the works—any of which could have derailed the bill, simply by forcing the amended legislation back to a committee for review.

On May 7, as the floor vote on Senate Bill 908 drew nearer, Graff and other MATCH members were in the House gallery watching as opponents tossed amendment after amendment at the bill, most of them failing by wide margins. “Some of the amendments were silly,” Graff recalls, “like one to ban all cigarettes in the state. They were just trying to toy with us on those. That one, for example, failed by a 30- or 40-vote margin. But then all of a sudden they call this other amendment: to outlaw possession of tobacco by minors. Suddenly [Rep.] Andrew Fleischmann [D-West Hartford] came running up the stairs to where Judy and I were sitting, and said, ‘I think this amendment is big trouble.’”

It was almost a re-enactment of the 1998 maneuver that torpedoed the federal tobacco control bill in the U.S. Senate: an attempt to kill a good bill by making it perfect. The cynicism of this particular stratagem was not lost on Graff: MATCH stands for Mobilize Against Tobacco for *Children's* Health. The group's 2002 TV ads, which had proven so influential in starting the preemption bandwagon, had focused on *children* overwhelmed by secondhand smoke.

Sponsors of this amendment seemed to be calculating that a move to criminalize underage smoking could be portrayed as a strong gesture for children's health—while in the process making the bill too radical to win majority support. Worse yet, under the General Assembly's rules, the introduction of a new criminal provision would mean that the bill would have to be sent to the Judiciary Committee for a new round of hearings.

It was clear that several of the representatives voting for the MATCH bill were doing so only because they had been trapped into supporting it. They had answered questionnaires or responded to queries at candidate forums, they had written pious letters in reply to local officials, or they had committed their support to the bill when they believed it would never come to the floor. Now they were stuck with the prospect of imminent legislation. They would soon have to return to their districts and tell every smoker—a formidable group in some areas—that their elected representative had just outlawed the after-dinner cigarette. Their one hope of escape was to cast a brave, principled vote for *children's health*—and dispatch the bill back to committee, where it would molder untouched as the session ended.

Halfhearted supporters had already weakened the smoking ban somewhat at an earlier point in the legislative process. When Senator Murphy first presented the statewide ban to his colleagues in the Senate's Democratic caucus, some of the

response was equivocal. At least one member, Senator Gary LeBeau (D-East Hartford) reported that he had canvassed his largely blue-collar constituents on the issue by taking a tour of East Hartford's neighborhood saloons. There, not surprisingly, he ran into a barrage of opposition—especially on the ban's application to bars.

Although Senator LeBeau supported Murphy's proposal in concept, he felt he had made a commitment to bar owners in his district that he would try to exempt them, or failing that, at least to delay their inclusion. A few other supporters had similar reservations about including bars. At LeBeau's urging, Murphy agreed to delay the start of the ban in bars and the bar section of bowling alleys by six months, until April 1, 2004. All other workplaces would become smoke-free on October 1, 2003.

That change had little long-term effect; it was at most a minor face-saver for a handful of key legislators. Potentially of greater significance was the exemption for clubs, fraternal groups and casinos. After the law's passage, opponents would argue that the exemption put commercial tavern owners at a competitive disadvantage and justified an amendment to restore smoking rights in bars. That, however, was in the future. More immediately, these weakening moves provided a glimpse of just how shaky some of the pledges of support for the bill might be—even among members of the party that had launched it.

Now, in the afternoon of May 7, 2003, in the final hours before a full vote in the House, with the state's Republican governor in open opposition and the House Minority Leader deriding the bill as "hypocritical and elitist," Fleischmann learned that the GOP leadership had found the Trojan Horse that they believed would put an end to Senate Bill 908. Representative Kevin Witkos, a young police officer from Canton and a freshman member of the House—one on record as supporting a statewide clean indoor air law—introduced an amendment to criminalize possession of tobacco by minors.

Although the statewide smoking ban had many Republican supporters, GOP leaders had put out the message, as Graff understood it, that "this is when your party needs you." Political pressure on Republicans to support the amendment, according to Fleischmann, was intense. For Republican representatives who had gone on record as supporting a smoking ban, party leaders pointed out that the amendment would provide political cover: Voting for a ban on underage smoking would be consistent with their public position—even though it would end up killing the whole initiative. "They could go home," Graff says, "and tell their constituents that they kept their pledge, and even strengthened the bill. The surgery would have been a success, and the patient would have died."

Graff and Blei had been caught in a surprise attack, with no time to mobilize other coalition forces or mount a counteroffensive in the House. The amendment was presented, with a few Democrats in support but virtually all the Republican troops lined up behind it, and at 4:51 p.m. the vote was called.

Of 56 Republican members, only three broke ranks. All three were strong, longtime health advocates from suburban districts where the idea of smoke-free dining and drinking was politically popular. Even so, their defiance of party discipline was remarkable, and no one at MATCH would have predicted it with certainty. The amendment needed 74 votes to pass, but received only 71.

Had it not been for the three rebel Republicans, MATCH would have ended another legislative session in defeat. Instead, with the final amendment eliminated, the complete bill passed a few minutes later by a comfortable 103-43.

"If there ever was a victory we can be proud of in the House, it is this one," Speaker Moira Lyons told the capital press corps minutes after the vote. She was not the only once-wavering House member who ended up cheering the result. Roughly a week later, Kevin Witkos' office issued a press release headlined "Witkos Votes to Prohibit Smoking in Public Places."

"While I am disappointed about the defeat of the [underage possession] amendment," the press release quoted Witkos as saying, "the underlying bill is a positive step in the right direction." MATCH's relentless effort to draw politicians into public support of the bill, its unyielding threat to win a repeal of preemption in the absence of a strong statewide ban, and its mobilization of rank-and-file voters to hold legislators to their public commitments had all paid off.

Governor John Rowland, despite many expressions of opposition to the bill, ultimately chose to sign it, though without much explanation or fanfare. He received the bill on May 20 and quietly signed it three days later, adding a quick, public prediction: "There probably will be some changes next year."

The law took effect 131 days after it was signed, but the provision for bars and bowling alleys wouldn't start for another six months—by which time, the General Assembly would once again be in session.

Postscript: Vigilance

After a brief celebration, MATCH resumed its battle formations and prepared to resist the near-certain effort for "some changes" in 2004. With support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, MATCH sent out a new round of direct mail to some 50,000 Connecticut households. The mailing reminded residents of the dangers of secondhand smoke and, most pointedly, asked them to thank Connecticut legislators for "doing exactly the right thing" in passing the statewide law the year before. Meanwhile, in letters to the editor and occasional news reports, bar owners and other opponents of the ban continued to protest that the dangers of secondhand smoke are "unsettled science" and "exaggerated for political effect"; that a smoking ban is bad for business; and that effective enforcement would be difficult, thus promoting contempt for the law.

As the new law took effect, MATCH made sure that a stream of news reports covered the ban's smooth, successful implementation, the effectiveness of enforcement, and the general lack of harmful consequences to restaurants and other affected businesses. Despite occasional angry letters to the editor from indignant smokers ("Freedom for Iraq, But No Freedom for Smokers in USA," read one headline on the letters page of Senator LeBeau's hometown newspaper, the *East Hartford Gazette*), editorials were overwhelmingly supportive. Much of the news coverage of the ban, its implementation, and its consequences was also positive, with many customers and restaurateurs speaking favorably or neutrally.

A month after the official start date, when Governor Rowland began repeating his desire to weaken the law, the *Connecticut Post's* capital columnist, Ken Dixon, launched a broadside that bore echoes of the previous years' debates: "Rowland

[has] reaped tens of thousands of dollars in campaign contributions from the tobacco industry during his nearly nine years in office.”⁷

In early 2004, Rowland became ensnared in a series of scandals and investigations that soon forced him from office. Thus, the person who could have been the most influential leader of a drive to amend the ban ended up having little to say about smoking one way or the other.

To counter the protests over “individual rights,” (read: smokers’ rights) and the cries of economic alarm from bar owners, MATCH summoned James Hyde, an expert from the Tufts University School of Medicine who, with a colleague, James Repace, had just studied the consequences of Boston’s recently enacted citywide smoking ban.

Not only had the levels of airborne carcinogens and pollutants in Boston beer halls fallen by more than 90 percent, the researchers reported at a March 30 press conference, but bars and pubs had suffered “no adverse economic impact.” To reassure restive Connecticut lawmakers, MATCH’s press release for the presentation pointed out that “Boston’s positive outcomes... were a factor in the Massachusetts legislature’s approval of a statewide smoking ban.”

Perhaps more influential than anything MATCH said in 2003, either in its public statements or during the flood of news coverage surrounding the ban, was the largely unspoken threat of a renewed fight over preemption. If the smoking ban were weakened, MATCH and its allies would have every reason to resume their push for local control of smoking laws. For most opponents of the new law, that would be worse than the status quo.

In early October, exactly one week after the smoking ban took effect everywhere except bars and bowling alleys, an op-ed column appeared in the *New Haven Register*, arguing strongly that lawmakers should indeed amend the ban when they reconvene in 2004. Specifically, the author said, they should make it *stronger*. The legislature, he wrote, “should include private clubs and let the exemption for cafés, taverns, and bowling alleys run out on April 1.” (Bars in Connecticut are legally classified as either taverns or cafés.) The author of the column was James B. Farrell, vice president of the Connecticut Restaurant Association.

Why was the trade group suddenly vocal now, after having been so taciturn in the weeks before the original vote? Because, Farrell wrote, “the alternative to a statewide ban was the repeal of state preemption, allowing individual municipalities to pass their own smoking ordinances. This approach has proven to be a tremendous folly in Massachusetts, where some 70 communities, including Boston, have a patchwork of legislation. Municipal preemption promotes unfair competitive advantages based on town lines throughout the state.”

“Preemption was what had given strength to the discussions about a statewide ban,” says Kevin Graff, looking back. “Preemption was driving the whole debate. Yet only a handful of folks recognized that fact. Most people didn’t get that if we ever abandoned our support of repealing preemption, all our leverage would have been gone at that instant. Even now, it’s kind of the sleeping dragon, and no one wants to wake it up.”

⁷ Ken Dixon, “Rowland Rethinking Smoke Ban,” *Connecticut Post*, Nov. 2, 2003.

In the 2004 session of the General Assembly, an effort to weaken the statewide ban fizzled. A House bill by Representative Leonard Greene (R-Beacon Falls) aiming to exempt small bars and allow larger bars and restaurants to set aside smoking sections died in committee. Both Speaker Lyons and Senate President Pro Tem Kevin Sullivan vowed early in the session to squelch any moves to change the law. "People don't want another debate on the issue this year," Senator Murphy told the *Meriden Record-Journal*, "after having gone through it in a number of forums last year."

Even so, MATCH and its member organizations kept up their public-awareness campaign and maintained a steady vigilance against any efforts to roll back the law. Not coincidentally, the annual Youth Rally against smoking took place in 2004 on the day before the April 1 start of the ban in bars. The event commands annual news coverage and photos appear in newspapers throughout the state.

Weakening the bill while 500-plus nonsmoking kids were amassed on the Capitol steps would have been a first-class political embarrassment. The rally's message, in effect, was "don't mess with the ban," and the Senate president personally appeared at the rally to promise the young people that the law was safe.

Most states and cities with strong smoke-free laws have found that these laws become significantly more popular—and harder to change—with every year they remain in effect. Far from provoking a consumer backlash, researchers have found that consumers grow to like the bans more and more as they get used to them.

Graff left MATCH in July 2004 to return to legislative staff as the policy director for Senate President Pro Tempore Donald E. Williams, Jr. and was succeeded as executive director by Stroman. As he left, Graff voiced hopes that the smoking ban would soon be old news—so old, so well established and accepted that "nobody is going to want to hear another word about it."

Lessons and Reflections

The success of Connecticut's public health organizations in rallying around the repeal of preemption, and then deftly switching to supporting a strict statewide smoking ban, owes much to the coalition's discipline—the determination to deliver a consistent message, to carefully plan and coordinate the work, and to try—although not always successfully—to keep internal disagreements from spilling into public view.

Just as important was the coalition's decision to rely for leadership on a team of seasoned capital insiders. Without this combination of discipline and political know-how, no amount of grant support, technical advice, or professional lobbying and public relations would have carried the day. Fundamentally, successful public advocacy is a matter of will, leadership, organization and persistence—all of which need money and technical support to succeed, but none of which can simply be bought.

Certainly, financial and logistical support was crucial to the Connecticut campaign. The coalition's four full-time staff members and general operational overhead were a

large and continuing expense. Advertising, organizing, communications and research—all of which MATCH used heavily—were another significant cost.

The production of television spots, tens of thousands of pieces of direct mail, a steady stream of scientific and political information for reporters, the relentless mobilization of local politicians and grassroots volunteers—all were effective mainly because of the persistence and savvy timing with which they were deployed.

The technical and financial support of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, through the program *SmokeLess States*, and the *Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids* were indispensable to this effort. Because of legal constraints on the use of foundation funds, the funding provided by other organizations to cover lobbying was also critical.

Aside from the money itself, the funders and advisers provided another ingredient essential to the success of the Connecticut effort: flexibility to respond to changing events. The staffs of the *SmokeLess States* program and the *Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids* had formed an early opinion of MATCH that would not have led to substantial support. Then suddenly, the coalition changed course, and an opportunity for significant progress opened up. With unusual alacrity, the national organizations recognized and seized the emerging opportunity and shifted resources in MATCH's direction.

At each stage, as Graff and his colleagues took new steps and adjusted to changing circumstances in Hartford, their supporters provided timely grants and materials, undisturbed by the unpredictable course of events or the tactical zigzagging going on at the front lines. Also, representatives of the national organizations provided steady encouragement and cautionary advice when fissures in the MATCH alliance appeared, and in that way they helped to keep the effort from foundering.

In short, determination and flexibility were crucial features of both the coalition's work *and* the funders' support. Had either quality been missing, at either end of the relationship, Connecticut would likely still be without a strict smoke-free law.

Seven other principles arising from Connecticut's story may be relevant to other advocacy groups and funders:

- 1. Tailor and target the message to the most influential audience.** The public health institutions that made up the MATCH Coalition had done an excellent job, over many years, informing the general public about the dangers of secondhand smoke. What they had not done as well, before 2002, was aim a narrower message specifically at powerful groups that had the power to change state law. That message needed to be: An effective smoke-free law will produce material benefits (or will avert material harm) *for you and your job*.

Beginning in 2002, MATCH put its initial emphasis on local officials for three reasons: First, they had more influence on legislators than members of the general public, and more than even the best-known health organizations. Second, they had a personal interest at stake: increasing their own power to protect the health of their constituents. Third, it was easier to mobilize them in force, quickly, than to rally a statewide movement at the grass roots. (That came later, and was critically important. But contacting 169 town councils is far quicker work than reaching 3.5 million Connecticut residents.)

MATCH followed the same practice of tailoring and targeting its message when it bought air time for its public-service ads. Instead of reaching for the largest possible audience, it zeroed in on its real target: public officials who would most likely be in front of their TVs during the local news broadcasts. MATCH opted for less-expensive “news adjacency” rather than the costly prime-time audience, because the payoff per dollar spent would be much higher.

In every case—in mobilizing youth rallies and voter-action drives, in funneling information to reporters, in conducting private negotiations with legislative leaders, MATCH’s message was consistent and tightly-focused. It concentrated on local control and repealing preemption, bolstered by a hard-earned constituency of local politicians, until there was a clear opportunity to get a strict statewide smoking ban through the General Assembly.

At that point, MATCH pivoted—still maintaining discipline and focus—to seize on the support of state politicians and restaurateurs for a strong statewide ban. In both cases, the message’s clarity, simplicity, consistency and target audience had to be strictly maintained, or the ensuing confusion could well have defeated the whole effort.

- 2. Get leaders who know the legislative process intimately—whether or not they are substantive experts.** “If the goal of an organization is to affect policy change,” says Kevin Graff, “it makes sense to find people who have experience in that arena.” Public-interest groups tend to favor leaders who share their members’ professional background and experience. School-reform groups tend to hire parents and educators, anti-poverty organizations often hire social workers or people who have lived and worked among the poor. Yet when the mission is policy advocacy rather than direct service, those may not always be the best sources of leadership.

Substantive background is an indispensable resource, but it may not be necessary for the people whose main job is to plot strategy and pick targets of influence. MATCH’s mission, says Andrew Hysell, the *Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids*’ New England representative at the start of the Connecticut campaign, “wasn’t winning a public health debate on the merits; the mission was saving lives. And that takes legislation, not just outreach and goodwill.”

It was important that Kevin Graff believed in the smoke-free cause and could quickly digest and use technical information about tobacco. But it was far more important that he knew legislators and their staff members on a first-name basis, understood how decisions are made in the Capitol, and had experience in shepherding an idea all the way through the legislative gauntlet. “If they haven’t had experience in the legislature,” says Hysell, “they probably don’t understand how that works.”

- 3. Manage division in the ranks, and take extraordinary pains to get all members to speak with one voice, according to one strategy.** Probably no coalition of independent organizations will ever march in lock-step, nor did MATCH members. One or another organization in the coalition did occasionally depart from the group’s approved message, revealed too much to a friendly legislator, or otherwise stepped out of formation in ways that harmed the

collective strategy. In one highly public incident related by Jerome, coalition allies engaged in a shouting match in the state capitol building.

Still, MATCH staff and members remained reasonably consistent and respectful of joint decisions. It is a fair generalization that the strength of any advocacy movement will be directly proportional to the degree of unity and discipline among all organizations on the same side of the issue. The more public dissension there is, or even friendly insubordination, the weaker the advocacy will be. Although public-interest groups tend to be diverse, pluralistic, even anarchic, in their normal operations, these tendencies need to be reined in, persistently, when an advocacy campaign is in full swing. A corollary to this point is:

- 4. Leaders need to lead; don't expect to manage everything by committee.** High-powered leadership coalitions like MATCH often consist of people who are more accustomed to giving direction than taking it. Unless they willingly subject their judgment to that of the group, and in some tactical cases, to the group's designated director, they should expect the coalition to be weaker than it otherwise could be. Campaigns for far-reaching change often need a command-and-control structure that members reasonably trust and will consistently follow, even when that is not their normal *modus operandi*. The designated leaders need the latitude to make commitments, assign resources and control how the message is delivered.
- 5. At the same time that strong leadership is needed, a coalition must also have a process for group decision-making and effective communications.** During the campaign, some MATCH members chafed under Graff's controlling style, and at times communications were poor. Graff, according to Jerome, readily acknowledged that he was not a "camp counselor" kind of person who was good at attending to everyone's needs and demands. But he was astute enough to see the need for better communications and structure and to seek advice on how to achieve them, she says.

After passage of the smoking ban, Graff—on Jerome's recommendation—brought in an organizational consultant to strengthen MATCH's operational infrastructure, including reshaping the board of directors and improving oversight of the executive director. For philanthropies, this shows the importance of providing timely oversight of funded projects and project personnel.

- 6. Funders and intermediaries also need firsthand experience in the legislative process and in the leadership of public-interest coalitions.** Graff's knowledge of the Connecticut legislature and his colleagues' knowledge of public-health politics in Connecticut surely far surpassed those of any of MATCH's funders or advisers.

But the experience that Matt Myers and Andrew Hysell built during the national tobacco wars of the 1990s, including efforts to strengthen other state tobacco-control programs, was likewise indispensable in helping MATCH rethink its initial organizational structure and choose the right director, and then in helping that director get the resources he needed when he needed them.

Similarly, the experience of the staff of the *SmokeLess States* program made it possible to channel money and material to MATCH promptly as needs and

circumstances changed. In either case, if the national supporters were not sufficiently savvy in the workings of politics and legislation, they would not have spotted the opportunities that emerged in Connecticut or been nearly as effective in helping MATCH seize those opportunities.

- 7. The story of the Connecticut smoking ban is both an encouraging and a cautionary tale because it shows both the possibilities and limits to promoting a social cause.** On one hand, the resources and leadership of *The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids*, *SmokeLess States* and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation helped support a more ambitious and more successful smoke-free effort than had ever been mounted in Connecticut before.

On the other hand, while these national organizations sought to exert influence on the campaign, they had relatively little impact on its overall direction once it was under way. For foundations, this story seems to suggest that the support of advocacy consists primarily of recognizing talent and opportunity, helping to gather the main local forces into a complete coalition, advising and encouraging them, and then, if they seem sufficiently determined, able, and disciplined, providing the resources they need to wage their own battle their own way.