



# NAHU's National Guidelines for Chapters Regarding Speaking with One Voice

**Approved by the NAHU Legislative Council and Board of Trustees, Spring 2005**

## **Development of Policy Positions for the Association**

- Clear policy statements on all major issues are necessary to guide the association's lobbying efforts/member communications.
- Policy statements need to be created and reviewed by a representative group of members to make sure that all sides are represented.
- Chapters should establish formal procedures for this process.
- Policy statements should be broad enough to allow lobbyists and legislative chairs flexibility in doing their work and conducting negotiations, but should guide the general principles of their efforts.
- There needs to be ample opportunity for all members, including the rank and file members, to review and comment on the association's policy statements before positions are formally adopted.
- Statements should include an automatic sunset date to encourage periodic review and evaluation.
- NAHU BOT model for the approval of position statements, and also existing state P&Ps on this might be helpful to use as a model for the other state chapters.
- It is incumbent upon the leadership at each level of the Association to communicate any and all policy positions to the respective membership in both a clear and timely manner.

## **Making Emergency Policy Decisions**

- Sometimes policy decisions need to be made on a very rapid basis, particularly in states with short legislative sessions, and a chapter might not always have a policy statement to cover every issue.
- A procedure needs to be developed to ensure that snap decisions are not made in a vacuum and are truly representative of the chapter's positions.
- The NAHU LMT model is suggested as a beginning template.
- It is incumbent upon those making emergency policy decisions to communicate not only the decision, but also the rationale for the decision, in a clear and timely manner to the membership.

## **Speaking on Behalf of the State/National Association**

- Obviously, individual members are entitled to their individual opinions.
- It is very important to encourage great debate on issues within the association prior to making a policy decision.
- Once a chapter makes a decision, all chapter members need to represent that position if they are communicating to anyone who might think they are speaking on behalf of the association.

- No member should claim affiliation with NAHU or a State AHU and then speak to a policymaker/press about an issue without both knowing what NAHU's position is, and representing NAHU's position.
- No member should attend a NAHU sponsored event (i.e., day on the hill) and then either speak to lawmakers in opposition to NAHU's view or speak to lawmakers about issues unrelated to NAHU's agenda.
- A rank and file member may communicate with a policymaker about an issue taking a position different than NAHU's as long as they do not promote NAHU affiliation or do anything that might cause the lawmaker to think they were speaking on behalf of the association. This dialogue must never take place during a meeting of NAHU members with the outside party.
- Chapter leaders need to understand that as a result of their position, it can be difficult to impossible for media and lawmakers to make the distinction between when a leader is speaking on behalf of the association or representing a personal point of view. So, on issues of consequence to the association, leaders must always represent NAHU's view or not speak to the issue. If the leader cannot do this, then he/she should consider resignation.

### **Sanctions**

- The imposition of sanctions as a deterrent for falsely representing the association are viewed as undesirable, but may be used as a necessary last resort.
- Counseling the offending member(s) and trying to resolve the issue privately and informally should always be the first step.
- Chapters should think creatively in terms of possible sanctions. A few examples of creative sanctions might include:
  - Recruiting “x” new members
  - Chairing a committee or project
  - Doing a CE course
  - Signing up Medicaid eligibles
  - Writing an op-ed piece for the local paper
- Removal from the association may be considered as an ultimate last resort for a particularly egregious offense, or for a member whose cumulative actions over time have proven him/her to be incapable of reforming their ways.