

Reproductive Freedom Day 2007

In 2007, the California Coalition for Reproductive Freedom organized its second annual lobbying event designed to help groups and individuals across the state advocate for reproductive health to legislators in Sacramento. Five RHIG members made the trip up to Sacramento for Reproductive Freedom Day, a bit unsure of what lobbying would be like, but passionate about the topic.

Before meeting with our assigned legislators, the entire group of participants – over 100 of us - convened in the Sacramento Convention Center to learn lobbying tips from the professionals. Reproductive health leaders shared with us some basic do's and don't's and then role-played a few scenarios we might encounter in our afternoon visits.

Individuals and groups convening in the Convention Center included seasoned lobbyists, abortion providers, students, and CBO representatives from across the state, many of whom spoke of their personal experiences and ideas. Participants ranged in age from adolescents to seniors and diverse ethnic groups were represented. A handful men were in attendance (including two of our RHIG members.)

Every participant was assigned to a team of 2-7 people to see two legislators. The main concepts we were lobbying for were keeping reproductive health in mind when planning healthcare reform and comprehensive sex education in schools. Two bills directly addressed sex education in schools, giving us concrete, proposed bills to sell to the legislators and/or their staff.

Keeping reproductive health in mind while planning healthcare reform was a broad topic we brought up at each meeting. CCRF did not back any particular healthcare reform proposal but did want to remind legislators to keep reproductive health on their front burner.

A great way to convey the importance of these topics was through sharing personal experiences with sex education and reproductive health. One RHIG lobbyist told legislators and staff the story of how her brothers were each sent off to college with a box of condoms and she was not, because as a girl, she didn't need condoms or sex education.

After two lobbying visits, we were treated to several informative and inspirational speakers back at the Convention Center. We then broke out into work groups to discuss selected issues in detail such as the GLBT community and reproductive health, the new HPV vaccine, and cultural competency.

When the Reproductive Freedom Day activities ended, we were pretty wiped out, overwhelmed with new information, new experiences, and a renewed passion for issues RHIG members care about. The trip was an excellent opportunity to learn how to speak with legislators and staff in the real world and was also an opportunity to connect with reproductive health advocates from all across the state. Armed with tactics and resources, I personally am very excited for next year's Reproductive Freedom Day!

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