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# Rallying Education Activism From The Grassroots Up: A Case Study of The South Carolina Education Improvement Act of 1984

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RALLYING EDUCATION ACTIVISM FROM THE GRASSROOTS UP:  
A CASE STUDY OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA EDUCATION  
IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 1984

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## DEDICATION

For the public school students and teachers of South Carolina.

You deserve better.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to many for their assistance in the completion of this dissertation. First, to those who gave their time for interviews. These include former U.S. Secretary of Education and S.C. Governor Dick Riley for his state and national leadership on behalf of America's public school children. To interview participants Dr. Larry Winecoff and Dr. Conrad Powell for their insights and documents on citizen participation; Vivian Watson, Joe Grant, and Elizabeth Gressette for descriptions of teacher interactions; Charleston attorney Bill Youngblood's recollections of dealings with the business community, and former S.C. Sen. Harry Chapman's legislative war stories.

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To the good people at the S.C. Department of Archives and History, who pulled boxes of documents from the Riley administration collection.

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## ABSTRACT

With the 1983 publication of *A Nation At Risk* that warned of the “rising tide of mediocrity” in American public education, southern governors took the lead in proposing reforms to their states’ lagging education systems. Among those was South Carolina Governor Richard W. Riley, who proposed public school reform legislation funded by a statewide one cent sales tax increase within the difficult context of a legislative election year. Facing stiff opposition to the tax increase from the South Carolina General Assembly, Riley launched a statewide grassroots effort to pressure the Legislature to enact the 1984 Education Improvement Act (EIA) and the dedicated tax increase to fund it. As the result of sustained citizen engagement, the state General Assembly approved the EIA and its sales tax increase intact. There are scholarly articles and dissertations detailing how other southern governors championed school reform in their respective states in the wake of *A Nation At Risk*. However, none focused on South Carolina’s unique “grass tops/grassroots” plan to build a network of education supporters to lobby a reluctant state Legislature for school reform and a tax increase. Using a case study approach, this dissertation examined the public participation strategy used to mobilize and sustain public activism for the EIA. Using qualitative research methods, data were gathered from archival documents, private collections, organization strategies, and news media reports from the 1983-1984 EIA initiative, as well as interviews with key participants, who devised and sustained the citizen participation network and successful lobbying effort.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AEA .....	Alabama Education Association
ANES .....	American National Election Study
CERRA .....	Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention and Advancement
ECS .....	Education Commission of the States
EIA .....	Education Improvement Act of 1984
FEC .....	Federal Election Commission
PSTA.....	Palmetto State Teachers Association
SCASA.....	South Carolina Association of School Administrators
SCEA .....	South Carolina Education Association
SCPTA .....	South Carolina Parent/Teacher Association
SCSBA.....	South Carolina School Boards Association
SGPB.....	Southern Growth Policy Board
SIC .....	School Improvement Council
SREB.....	Southern Regional Education Board

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The balcony overlooking the House chambers filled up every day with grassroots supporters. The opposition made snide references to ‘all those teachers in the gallery, why weren’t they at home teaching?’ Also, on our desks was an ever growing pile of pink slips – slips with telephone numbers of constituents who had called and wanted us to call back, slips with the names of people waiting out in the lobby to talk to us about the bill.

--South Carolina Representative Harriet Keyserling

*Against the Tide: One Woman’s Political Struggle*

For decades, both public education academic and monetary policies have been hotly debated by the South Carolina General Assembly. Legislation included enactment of tough accountability requirements (1998), strict curriculum standards (2000), and high stakes testing (2001). Recently, the state legislature has considered controversial issues, such as teacher pay for performance and tax credits or vouchers for private schools parents. Public schools also receive intense, annual scrutiny by the General Assembly during its appropriation proceedings, in part because public education comprises 40% of South Carolina’s total budget (<http://www.scstatehouse.gov/>).

Although always in the legislative spotlight, the school funding debate was never more intense than during the 1984 session when Gov. Richard W. Riley proposed an education reform package, entitled the Education Improvement Act (EIA). Broad and comprehensive in scope, the proposed school reforms were to be funded by a one cent increase in the state sales tax

No elected official in South Carolina willingly embraces a statewide tax increase. Therefore, the Riley education proposal was launched at the worst possible time – an election year in which all members of the S.C. General Assembly were up for reelection. Most Statehouse observers, even those sympathetic to school improvement, gave the EIA and its penny tax little chance of receiving legislative approval in the 1984 election year.

However, with a deliberate, coordinated strategy to build a county-by-county grassroots movement among public school supporters, which researchers likened to a political campaign, the unexpected happened (Chance, 1986). The EIA with its penny sales tax increase intact was approved by the state Legislature and signed into law in June, 1984. News accounts heralded the bill’s passage as a “miracle” (Norton, 1984, July 1, p. 1A). However, the real miracle was mobilizing a strong, united education network where none existed. Persistent legislative lobbying on the part of public school supporters is largely credited with passage of the EIA. In the aftermath, Gov. Riley said the EIA grassroots initiative was praised by the RAND Corporation as the “most significant” of education reform efforts in the nation (personal communication, March 11, 2014).

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

The EIA effort remains unique in South Carolina. Similar statewide public education activism was not seen before or since the bill’s passage. With legal prohibitions

against public employee collective bargaining and no coordinated education organizations in South Carolina, actively engaging the public school community – particularly teachers and school administrators -- in any statewide policy initiative is difficult, particularly when passage of controversial school legislation is sought.

Public school teachers make up the largest state employee group with over 40,000 certified teachers working in the state’s 81 school districts, according to data from the S.C. Department of Education (<http://www.ed.sc.gov/>). With these numbers, public school teachers should be a formidable voting bloc in statewide elections. However, recent data indicated that public school teachers are not engaged in public policy at the most fundamental level: registering to vote and voting in statewide elections.

A 2009 study (<http://www.risesc.org/>) of public school teacher voting during the 2006 statewide elections indicated that over 50% of South Carolina’s teachers either chose not to vote in the 2006 elections or could not vote because they were not registered. The 2006 election was significant because it involved elections for governor, state education superintendent, and candidates for both the S.C. House of Representatives and state Senate.

While the most direct way teachers and public education groups can influence state lawmakers is through the ballot box, South Carolina educators have other avenues to Statehouse influence. There are two voluntary teacher associations in South Carolina that employ Statehouse lobbyists. However, data show less than 40% of the state’s certified teachers belong to either organization.

With low voter participation and no strong organizational structure to make their voices heard at the Statehouse, the education community in the Palmetto State appears to

be largely disengaged from state policy making. Consequently, educators seem silent or passive when it comes to legislative proposals affecting their classrooms, curriculum, or school funding.

National studies have noted the policy disengagement of public school educators, even in states with prominent teacher unions. Since the enactment of state and federal accountability legislation in the late 1990s, national studies reported that public school teachers feel excluded in education policymaking.

A number of national studies have described how “most teachers are clearly not a part” of policy formation and many “feel out of the loop” (Public Agenda, 2001, p. 18). The Public Agenda report labeled teachers a “neglected constituency” that felt “buffeted by forces beyond their control and decisions are taken without their input” (p. 18). A similar finding arose from a 2009 national survey of 40,000 teachers, financed by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Scholastic, Inc. Survey results showed teacher opinions are consistently overlooked in the formation of school policy (Sawchuk, 2010). “Teachers make up the bulk of the staffing in districts and schools, and they are the anchor of the profession. It seems to us their voices ought to really count,” wrote Vicki L. Phillips of the Gates Foundation.

While there have been national studies of educator engagement in policy formation, none have focused on South Carolina, a state with no public employee collective bargaining rights and little lobbying power. Since passage of the EIA 30 years ago, few comprehensive school reform and funding packages have been presented for approval by the S.C. General Assembly. Nor has a grassroots movement by the education community arisen with such intensity that the state Legislature was compelled to increase

education funding. Therefore, this case study examined how educators and public school supporters throughout South Carolina mobilized around the issue of school improvement and increased funding, encouraged by a single-minded governor, who looked to the populace to make the change.

## 1.2 Background

The 1957 launching of the Soviet Union satellite *Sputnik* sparked a nationwide debate over the status of scientific research and the preparation American public school students were receiving compared to their Russian counterparts. Questions centered on whether U.S. schools could produce students capable of overtaking the Soviet lead in what was termed the “Space Race.”

Twenty-six years later, a similar national debate arose, questioning the quality of American public education compared to education offered by other nations. The 1983 publication of *A Nation At Risk : The Imperative for Educational Reform*, produced by U.S. Secretary of Education Terrel H. Bell’s National Commission on Excellence in Education, stated the country’s economic prosperity was threatened by a “rising tide of mediocrity” in its public schools, which undermined the achievement gains after the *Sputnik* reforms. It challenged the country’s school system to prepare students for the “Information Age,” already embraced by countries in the Far East and Europe.

The *Nation At Risk* report specifically pointed to gains made by Japan and the academic achievement of its students according to test scores. Without improvements in American education, the report concluded that the nation’s competitive economic edge was at stake. (<https://www2.ed.gov/pubs/NatAtRisk/risk.html>). Consequently, education

focus in the U.S. shifted from Sputnik and scientific research to Toyota and economic development.

Despite the national report commissioned by his cabinet member, President Ronald Reagan did not place school reform as an administration priority. Instead, it was southern governors who responded to the challenge. An article in *The Washington Post* (1983, Sept. 28) reported that southern states were at the “forefront” of innovative school reform efforts, departing from their image of having “the most backward public schools in the nation” (p. A3). Leading school improvement proposals and promoting tax increases to pay for them were the work of governors throughout the South.

Surprisingly, Southern governors appear to be spearheading the reform drive, reversing the region's history of underfunding education. Comprehensive education reform programs tied to increases in the state sales tax are pending in South Carolina and Tennessee. Similar programs have already been passed in Mississippi, Florida, and Arkansas” (Bencivenga, 1984).

The “southern education governors” were Bill Clinton of Arkansas, Robert Graham of Florida, William Winter of Mississippi, Richard Riley of South Carolina, and Lamar Alexander of Tennessee.

Southern governors were “crucial” to the public education reform movement because “they mobilized the public and legislators in their states to support educational reforms” (Vinovskis, 1999, p. 7). Also supporting the governors was the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), an influential committee made up of southern governors, state legislators, and state education officials. Prior to the release of *A Nation At Risk*, the SREB published *The Need For Quality* in 1981. This much publicized report

assisted governors in emphasizing education reform as an important state priority (Vinovskis, p. 19).

Driven by widespread public interest generated by *A Nation At Risk*, southern governors embraced school reform as a way to overcome their states' economic "backwardness," which was a drag on the region's ability to attract new industry and jobs. "The governors frequently mobilized the populace in order to overcome opposition from many of the state legislators who were reluctant to raise taxes for any cause – including education" (Vinovskis, p. 41).

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study is to document the efforts made by S.C. Gov. Richard W. Riley to build a statewide, unified grassroots network, county by county, rallying educators, business people, parents, and the public education community to aggressively promote passage of the 1984 Education Improvement Act (EIA). Riley's endeavor is notable because no formal, unifying statewide structure was in place to organize public school teachers, administrators, and education supporters in general.

Due to the uniqueness of the EIA effort, qualitative research study methods were employed to examine and document the grassroots community consensus building effort. Transcripts from one-on-one digitally recorded interviews were used to capture and analyze qualitative data from research participants. Interviews included political, governmental, business, education, academic, and community leaders involved in building and implementing the grassroots campaign for passage of the 1984 EIA. Among the interviewees were former U.S. Secretary of Education and S.C. Gov. Richard W.

Riley, members of his gubernatorial staff, educators, teacher association staff members, business leaders, academicians, and community education supporters.

In addition to individual interviews, research included examining internal and external political documents, government publications, media reports, videotapes, speeches, community newsletters, and pamphlets. Also examined and analyzed were newspaper articles and editorials, public documents, business and association communications, and public relations material used during the campaign to enact the 1984 legislation. Additionally, public documents from the Riley administration, housed at the S.C. Department of Archives and History, were reviewed, as well as papers from the personal collections of participants.

The case study explored these broad-based topics:

- 1) Initial strategies for passage of the EIA and its penny sales tax increase
- 2) Organizing and sustaining lobbying efforts over time
- 3) Steps taken to publicize the proposed bill and build citizen support for its passage
- 4) Soliciting and engaging support among educators, parents, business leaders and community activists
- 5) Building enthusiasm and encouraging the education community and the public to take an active role

#### 1.4 Study Significance

Examining the unique effort to gain passage of the EIA will contribute the following. First, there are no scholarly works describing the South Carolina school reform grassroots effort, the organization strategies used or revised, or the reaction and response of the state’s education community when asked to speak out. While there are publications that focused specifically on the involvement of the business community to aid passage of the reform bill, none exclusively provide an in-depth look at the grassroots organizing effort (Archer, 2013; Brown-Nagin, 1998).

Second, a number of scholarly articles have examined the rise of “southern education reform governors” following the 1983 publishing of *A Nation At Risk*. These studies focused on the school reform efforts of Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton, Mississippi Gov. William Winter, Tennessee Gov. Lamar Alexander, and North Carolina Gov. Jim Hunt (Stallings, 2010; Thomas, 1992). There are no scholarly publications that analyzed Gov. “Dick” Riley’s 1983 grassroots effort to pass his signature school reform legislation. Moreover, no studies have focused on the efforts of other southern education governors to build a statewide grassroots support system to enact their school reform initiatives during a legislative election year.

In addition, during the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *A Nation At Risk*, a number of articles in academic journals, education publications, and the popular press recounted reform efforts in the South. While school initiatives in South Carolina were mentioned, the spotlight focused on Clinton, Alexander and Winter. In fact, many articles from 1983 to the present described the work of Alexander, Clinton, Winter, Hunt, and other southern governors during the 1980s school reform movement. However, few described the efforts

of Riley in South Carolina, even though he went on to serve as U.S. Secretary of Education during the Clinton administration.

Third, scholars suggest education research has shifted away from examining school policy making on the state or federal levels and has moved toward research focused solely on the analysis of education policy. According to Frances Fowler (2006), the field of education policy making “tends to be rather atheretorical” (p. 42). Therefore, education researchers are more likely to set aside the making of state or federal school policy in favor of examining the policy itself, she indicated. Consequently, this case study, which examined a southern state’s school policy making effort during the 1980s, is of value to the academic research field.

## CHAPTER 2

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

As Maxwell (2005) wrote, a conceptual framework “is something structured, not found. It incorporates pieces that are borrowed from elsewhere, but the structure, the overall coherence, is something you build, not something that exists ready-made” (p. 39). It also begins “the process of bounding and framing the research by defining the larger theoretical, policy or social problem or issue of practice that the study will address” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 32).

Therefore, the structure of this study was based on three essential components. First, the situated knowledge I brought to the case study. Second, the theoretical background used to inform the study. Third, academic literature pertinent to the topics and concepts reviewed for this case study.

#### **2.1 Situated Knowledge**

Because in qualitative research, the research instrument is the researcher herself, it is essential to describe the situated knowledge I brought to this case study. I joined the staff of Gov. Dick Riley in 1983 after he was re-elected, becoming the first two-term governor of South Carolina. Prior to being hired as Riley’s speechwriter, I was a legislative reporter covering the S.C. Senate and a political reporter covering both state

and federal campaigns. From this vantage point, I was familiar with Riley's work as governor in particular and important statewide issues in general. Riley had a long-standing interest in public school issues, both as a state senator and during his first term as governor. Education was a priority in his first term; however, public school problems shared his attention with poverty, health, and environmental issues. Education became the central focus of his priorities upon the publishing of *A Nation At Risk* in 1983 and the 1981 Southern Governor's Education Association (SREB) report *The Need for Quality*.

As the second term speechwriter, I was among a small group of Riley staff members, who devoted most of their working hours to efforts to pass what was to become Riley's signature second term accomplishment, the 1984 Education Improvement Act funded by a one cent sales tax increase. Daily, I worked with key gubernatorial advisors – in particular, political advisor Bill Prince and education advisor Dr. Terry Peterson – crafting a unified message to explain the benefits of the EIA's reforms. This included producing press releases to spur media interest and writing speeches for use by the governor, educators, and business supporters as they traveled the state to rally support for the reform measures and the essential need for the penny funding. The slogan for the campaign was encapsulated in the bumper sticker "A Penny For Their Thoughts."

One lasting memory from that time was huddling around the computer in the governor's press office with Bill Prince and Terry Peterson, writing and rewriting talking points and speeches for EIA supporters. During 1983, there seemed to be no occasion – a business consortium, a funeral eulogy, or the opening of hunting season – without linking the event to the need for funding school reform.

Although I attended none of the regional community rallies, I participated in reviewing the written comments collected from the public at the small group sessions that followed the forums. The small group sessions solicited recommendations and observations about the EIA components. Many of these observations and suggestions became elements in subsequent speeches.

As legislative opposition rose, especially to the tax increase, specific speeches were written to highlight the necessity of the EIA funding to counteract arguments against the one cent sales tax increase. The culmination of this endeavor was a statewide 30-minute television address by Gov. Riley to reinforce the benefits of the reforms and the necessity of a permanent means to pay for it. Broadcasted by S.C. Education Television and by all the state's commercial television stations, the governor's November address was unprecedented. No other statewide gubernatorial television address, promoting the need for legislative action, had occurred before or since then. In the aftermath of its passage, I produced speeches and press releases as the EIA and sales tax increase were put into effect, including other initiatives to maintain and expand the reforms of the 1984 law.

The firsthand knowledge I bring to this case study underscored my belief that when properly motivated, those who support public education can wield the political power that their numbers suggest. As previously noted, the unique public involvement in state school reform has not been replicated since the EIA effort. There has been no prominent state leader who championed public education since the Riley administration. Nor have public school teachers been vocal in their attitudes toward controversial issues, such as pay based on student test scores, school and teacher report cards, or promotion of

private school vouchers funded by out-of-state interests -- a particular issue favored by governors over the past ten years. Witnessing the power that teachers, administrators, and public school supporters can exert in the Legislature and during election years make this case study not only important to the research field, but also to demonstrate the impact educators can make when unified and motivated.

## **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

Because this study examined the impact of public engagement in the legislative process, four theoretical lens were used to guide and analyze the research. All four theories focus on the how's and why's citizens are drawn into the public sphere, and the impact they can make. These theories are political action theory, citizen empowerment and engagement theory, critical theory, and feminist theory.

### **2.2.1 Political action theory.**

Political action theory arises from three foundational concepts: societal modernization, mobilizing agencies, and social and cultural motivation. (Norris, 2002).

1) Societal modernization: this theoretical concept is based historically on the industrialization of Western societies and the rise of the educated class during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. As democracies modernized, community interests shifted from rural populations with low skills and high illiteracy. Before this change, tightly knit local communities resulted in narrow social and geographic influences. Rural populations focused exclusively on their own families and problems with little participation in society outside their communities.

With modernization, basic schooling increased, populations shifted from rural to urban settings, and skilled labor opportunities arose from industrialization and

manufacturing. By World War II, the service sector, both in the public and private spheres, had grown, requiring more education, specified skills, and specialization in professions, such as finance, science, technology, and trade. Governmental bureaucracy also grew to serve the needs of an expanding urban population and a growing military. The third shift came after World War II, as the population moved from urban to suburban communities. The growth of suburbia signaled a rise in the middle class, higher education attainment fueled by the G.I. Bill, and increased methods of public communication through media advances made during the war.

Political scientists, who subscribe to modernization theory, assert that a rise in literacy, education, and communication methods fueled citizen engagement and participation. “Growing levels of human capital, in particular, should plausibly serve to buttress and strengthen citizen participation. Studies have long established that education, and the cognitive skills that it provides, is one of the factors that most strongly predicts individual political activism” (Norris, 2002, p. 3).

2) Mobilizing agencies: In contrast to political action based on historical and economic developments, some political scientists embrace the influence of social agencies to mobilize citizen engagement. These social agencies include volunteer organizations, churches, unions, political parties, and the news media. These groups provide the face-to-face networking and community or special interest bonds to build the social trust needed to motivate citizen activism.

The rise of social media outlets to promote ideas and public discussion is a more recent way to build community and mobilization, although not face-to-face. While coverage of issues and commentary do not take the form of traditional mobilizing

agencies, widespread access to media may be even more potent to participatory activism and/or citizen interest and discussion.

3) Social and cultural motivation: The third component of political action theory is social and cultural motivation based on the personal characteristics of the individual. The key to civic activism is personal motivation.

Norris (2002) stated motivational attitudes are affective, such as a sense of duty or patriotism or a response to a personal benefit. Those with advanced education (college or above), higher income, and professional careers tend to be more politically active. Based on the Civic Voluntarism Model, increased resources have been employed by individuals who are predisposed to civic engagement. Educational levels and socio-economic status factor in to an individual's civic engagement. In addition, social connections – families, neighbors, co-workers, churches, associations, and civic organizations – are used as channels for personal activism (Norris, 2002).

“Many cultural attitudes and values may shape activism,” Norris wrote, “including the sense the citizen can affect the policy process (internal political efficacy) and political interest, as well as a general orientation of support from the political system” (p. 8). However, during the past several decades, an increase in cynicism toward government representation has led to a decline in democratic engagement, including voting.

### **2.2.2 Citizen empowerment and engagement theory.**

Much like political action theory, citizen empowerment and engagement theory examines the practical steps to actively involve citizens in issues having a direct impact on their current and future wellbeing. Rocha (1997) asserted that both individual

empowerment and community empowerment are developmental. Drawing on scholarly research, Rocha described the four step ladder to citizen empowerment (p. 33).

First is the concept that “It strengthens me,” whereby the individual gains feelings of power by associating with something or someone outside himself, such as involvement or following a charismatic leader. This leads to the second step when the individual develops a feeling of personal self-sufficiency. The third step is the sense of having an impact on others, which Rocha summarized as the word “assertion.” The person begins to think of himself as a “help-giver,” instead of a “help-receiver” (p. 33). This development gives rise to the fourth step, “‘I gain strength from serving/influencing others.’ This stage is characterized by the concepts of togetherness and moralized action” (p. 33).

Through these four steps, the citizen grows from an individual locus to a community locus, depending on the context of the situation and its impact on the individual. From his study of empowerment and engagement theories, Rocha described five points on the empowerment continuum: Atomistic Individual empowerment, the Embedded Individual, Mediated empowerment, Socio-political empowerment, and Political empowerment.

Drawing from the traditional understanding of empowerment, the Atomistic Individual concept arises from the support of powerful others. However, Rocha stated this is the least effective when addressing social problems (p. 34). Depending on the situational context, the Embedded Individual draws strength from an organization and the channel to participation it provides. Embedded Individual participation can be through voluntarism or involvement in the organization’s decision making. In this form, however, individuals decide how much or how little they want to be involved (Rocha, p. 35).

In Mediated Empowerment, an expert or professional acts as an advisor to the citizen. In order for help to be given, the professional or expert must explain the successes and “pitfalls” of participation, which must be fully understood and accepted by the individual (Rocha, p. 37).

Based on Freire’s work on critical consciousness, Socio-Political empowerment uses collaborative grassroots political activism as a benchmark (Rocha, p. 38). Sometimes referred to as “transformative populism,” this stage changes the community from bystanders to actors in and through this empowerment stage (Rocha, p. 37). This allows the community to move beyond individual action to collaborative action and from short term benefits to more lasting political power.

Developing empowerment into political action for institutional change is the hallmark of Political Empowerment. Resulting in voting and voting representation, Political Empowerment motivates a collaborative effort by individuals, who encompass wide geographic representation. The goals of Political Empowerment are legislative transformation, thereby altering the legal relationship between community members and the political environment. “Although the individual is the ultimate receptor of benefits, political power is the goal and political process the means” (Rocha, p. 40).

Although Rocha (1997) described the four steps to empowerment, he asked, “How can local organizations be motivated to encompass empowerment objectives and processes? This is a difficult question” (p. 41).

In a qualitative study of 100 citizen engagement cases in 20 countries, Gaventa and Barrett (2010) found citizen engagement can make a difference in democratic outcomes (p. 12). Their study showed citizen participation in public issues can increase government

responsiveness. However, like the empowerment ladder described by Rocha, Gaventa and Barrett (2010) found that “successful outcomes are not a straight line but linked through organizing skills and thickness of civic networks. As individuals grow in their sense of self efficacy and engagement, they benefit from a thickening of alliances and relationships that in turn encourage greater participation” (p. 30).

Regarding the link between organizing skills and thickness of civic networks, Gaventa and Barrett (2010) observed:

- Having a sense of citizenship is one thing, translating that sense into action is another (p.33). Knowledge is the first step to action; using knowledge effectively is the next. Greater skills and knowledge translate to new forms of action.
- If citizen participation is merely cosmetic, it can result in negative outcomes, even if positive outcomes and government responsiveness are abundant. In some cases, the changes sought are not sustainable.
- Associations and social movements are much more likely to get a responsive, positive outcome.

The authors concluded that engaging citizens in a social movement did not arise automatically, but needed intermediary measures to promote engagement (p. 59).

### **2.2.3 Critical theory.**

Critical theorists focus their research questions on the oppression and domination of stakeholders within a system. Critical inquiry research challenges the status quo, examines situations in terms of conflict and oppression, and seeks to bring about change (Crotty, 1998). This theoretical lens advances the idea of *praxis*, a dynamic combination

of self-reflection and authentic action. It also encompasses the power of dialogue, fellowship, and community.

Power and society are at the center of critical discourse. Critical ethnographers are not the only ones focused on power, but they “are almost alone in treating power as the central concept either to explain or help explain the research” (Quantz, 1992, p. 478). It is not only power, but its context within history, that interests critical theorists. This is not so much grand narrative, but an examination of people and power within a certain context (Quantz, 1992).

As Kicheloe, McLauren & Steinburg (2011) explained, the best understanding of critical theory is within “the context of empowering individuals” (p. 164). Research within the frame of critical theory addresses the oppression of people and embraces the political nature of the research. Critical theorists contend those oppressed by a dominating power structure begin to internalize the attitudes of the oppressors, thus adopting a “culture of silence.” Crotty (1998) observed, “Not only do they not have a voice, but worse still, they are unaware that they have no voice,” undermining their right to participation ( p. 154).

Noted Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire (1970) insisted that those at the center of the research process are partners in the research itself. Leaders of change must understand the reality of the circumstances of oppression within its historical context (p. 67). It is through dialogue between the leader and participants that all become “jointly responsible for a process in which they all grow” (p. 80). However, change does not come from dialogue alone. Rather, Freire (1970) stated, “Critical reflection is also action” (p. 128). “In this communion, both groups grow together, and the leaders, instead

of simply being self-appointed, are installed or authenticated in their praxis with the praxis of the people” (p. 130).

The political nature of education has become a greater focus in current research. Carspecken and Apple (1992) wrote that the “nature of power” as an orienting framework “provides a conceptual and normative orientation that organizes the *questions* critical researchers ask” (p. 510). Qualitative methodology form a firm platform for critical research since the research is based on certain concerns and questions. “Critical researchers are usually politically minded people who wish, through their research, to aid struggles against inequality and domination” (Carspecken & Apple, 1992, p. 512).

The scope of this case study was a good fit within a critical theoretical framework since critical theorists seek to understand the “experience of individuals within their social organizations” and promote “human agency” (LeCompte, 1993).

#### **2.2.4 Feminist theory.**

Feminist theory is appropriate to an examination of educator activism in South Carolina school policy making because the vast majority of the state’s public school teachers are women. According to 2009-2010 figures from the S.C. Department of Education, there were 48,258 certified teachers in South Carolina. Of these, 37,365, or 77.4%, are women; 8,541, or 17.7%, are men. Because women make up more than three-fourths of the state’s public school educators, it is fair to conclude that a case study of comprehensive school reform falls within the feminist theory framework.

Policy making in South Carolina is a man’s world. Although the state currently has its first female governor, the majority of elected officials in South Carolina are men. According to 2010 figures compiled by the Southeastern Institute for Women in Politics,

South Carolina ranked 50<sup>th</sup> nationally in the number of women elected to public office on any level (<http://sselectswomen.com/>).

With the exception of the current governor, all previous South Carolina governors were men. Also, with the exception of the late Nancy Stevenson's four years as lieutenant governor (1979-1983), all state lieutenant governors are and have been men. South Carolina government is dominated by the state Legislature, yet currently there are only two women among the 46 members of the S.C. Senate. There are 15 women in the state House of Representatives.

Although women make up a majority of the state's educators, only three women have served as state Superintendent of Education, a statewide elected office. These women are Barbara Neilson, who served from 1990-1998, and Inez Tennenbaum, who served from 1998-2007. The third female superintendent, Molly Spearman, was elected in November 2014. Most public education policy is developed and carried out at the state level; therefore, the lack of women in positions to influence school policy is notable.

Feminist research is based largely on qualitative methods, relaying the woman's point of view, giving voice "as best she can to those who have been silenced" (Visweswaran, 1997, p. 614). Therefore, the lens of feminist theory is appropriate as one of the theoretical foundations of this case study.

Rebecca Campbell and Sharon Wasco (2000) wrote in *Feminist Approaches to Social Science: Epistemological and Methodological Tenets*, "The overarching goal of feminist research is to identify the ways in which multiple forms of oppression impact women's lives and empower women to tell their stories by providing a respectful and egalitarian research environment" (p.787).

According to Ardovini-Brooker (2002), feminist methodology also “produces generalized knowledge-claims on the basis of experience,” a sharing of information, acknowledging oppression, and taking into account her own personal experiences as part of the research process. “Feminist research is distinctive in that the research is political in nature and has the potential to bring about change in women’s lives” (p. 9).

Using qualitative methodology for this case study fits well with feminist theory because the feminist perspective is “distinct from other approaches in that it links theory and practice and, in doing so, highlights the significance of personal narratives, lived experience, subjectivity, and political praxis (hook , 2000)” (Dhamoon, 2013).

As Virginia Olsen (2000) wrote in *Feminisms and Qualitative Research at and into the New Millennium*, “For me, feminist inquiry is dialectical,” thereby justifying qualitative research methods (p. 216). However, a qualitative approach is seldom used in governmental policymaking, which tends to be “largely quantitative and male dominated” and “has not been a receptive focus for feminist qualitative research whatever the field” (p. 217).

Although not all those involved in the EIA effort were women, the participation of women as active lobbyists had a significant impact on the outcome of the EIA’s passage. With raising teachers’ salaries to the Southeastern average as a major component of the EIA, it can be argued that enactment of the S.C. school reform bill was the making of feminist governmental policy. Therefore, Feminist theory serves as a natural lens through which to examine the research questions.

## 2.3 Review of Related Studies

To understand the contribution of this case study to academic research, it is essential to identify where it falls within scholarly literature exploring similar themes: educator policy inclusion and engagement, voter participation, feminist political activism, the influence of maternal governmental policies, and the impact of school reform in the 1980s. The following review of related academic studies demonstrates what this case study would add to current literature on the engagement of the education community in state school policy.

### 2.3.1 Southern education reform in the 1980s.

In his examination of the school reform effort during the 1980s, William Chance (1986) noted “a new reassertion of the public interest” when education became a priority among governors and state legislatures (p. iii). He wrote that the word “revolution” was often used to describe the movement, but he suggested that was too strong a term. However, he asserted that decade displayed a shift from previous routine, mundane legislative bills to proposals of a “higher purpose.” Thus, “conveying an implication of the future meaningful involvement of a much broader coalition” (Chance, 1986, p. 3).

In the first modern wave of education reform following the October 1957 Soviet launching of Sputnik, the federal government took the lead in boosting education, especially in math and science. In contrast, the 1983 *A Nation At Risk*, published by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, was the catalyst for governors and state legislatures to take the lead with an array of reforms and funding initiatives (Doyle & Hartle, 1985).

Although *A Nation At Risk* is often thought to be the springboard of the national school reform movement, states already were embracing the issue. According to Doyle and Hartle (1985), observers were surprised by actions undertaken by the states; however, “the truth is the states have quietly become the most important actors in education policy making” (p. 22). For example, reports from the Education Commission of the States (ECS) noted similar needs for school improvement, and most states responded, particularly those in the South.

Chris Piphon (1984), deputy director of the ECS Information Clearinghouse, cited nine states for their extraordinary reform efforts. Of these, six states were in the South. Tennessee Gov. Lamar Alexander and Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton called for special legislative sessions to deal with public school funding. South Carolina Gov. Dick Riley was noted for mobilizing citizens to pressure the S.C. General Assembly to pass his “New Approach to Quality Education,” funded by a statewide one cent sales tax increase. In West Virginia, Virginia, and Georgia, Gov. John D. Rockefeller IV, Gov. Charles Robb, and Gov. Joe Frank Harris, respectively, called for significant increases in teacher pay.

An extension of the southern effort was the establishment of the Southern Growth Policies Board (SGPB), chaired by Alexander. In 1983, North Carolina Gov. Jim Hunt served as chairman of the ECS’s Task Force on Education and Economic Growth. That same year, the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) Task Force on Higher Education and the Schools was created. Gubernatorial activism was extended with the formation of the 1985 ECS task force on teaching, leadership, parent involvement,

student readiness, and technology, chaired by Alexander with Clinton serving as vice chairman.

These national and regional committees were examples of the collaboration by southern governors to grow their lagging economies through education improvement (Gitterman, 2011). Gitterman wrote that governors mobilized the public in support of job growth through better education in order to convince reluctant state legislatures that more school funding was essential for economic development (p. 38).

### **2.3.2 Educator surveys regarding inclusion in policy making.**

Recent national surveys have found teachers decry their lack of involvement in school policy making. One example is the 2001 national report by Public Agenda, which focused on teacher civic engagement. Of significance is that the report was issued the same year as the sweeping federal No Child Left Behind school legislation was enacted.

Entitled *Just Waiting To Be Asked?*, the study examined the attitudes of education stakeholders, including teachers (Farkas, Foley & Duffett, 2001). In addition to finding teachers were the “most disgruntled” about the decision making process, the report stated “most teachers are clearly not a part” of policymaking. Seventy percent of the surveyed teachers said they felt “out of the loop” when it came to school decision making (p. 18). Many said policymakers are not interested in their input.

In addition, the Public Agenda study reported a surprising 70% of the 404 public school teachers surveyed never heard of public engagement. After being asking more specific questions on public engagement, 42% of the teacher said that they were involved. In contrast, 78% of their superintendents reported faculty public engagement efforts in their districts (Farkas, Foley & Duffett, 2001).

Similarly, a 2003 Public Agenda study reported that three out of four American teachers felt that they had become “scapegoats for all the problems facing education and sense little support from administrators or parents” (Public Agenda, 2003). Drawing from data collected from a national survey of 1,345 K-12 public school teachers, Public Agenda reported an attitude of “vulnerability” among teachers, bolstering their support for tenure and trusting their teacher unions to “stand by me.”

### **2.3.3 Teachers’ roles in political engagement.**

In a 1963 essay, Robert E. Cleary of the George Peabody College for Teachers wrote that educators give up their ability to shape educational policy unless they are willing to get involved in political activism. Cleary observed that for decades educators “have been extremely careful to avoid involvement in politics, or even the appearance of political involvement” (p. 323). He wrote, “This ignores the fact that public education is almost completely dependent on government for its financing” (p. 324).

Lack of knowledge about the political process and failing to embrace political activism “has led the typical teacher in the United States to forfeit his right to a powerful voice in the determination of educational questions” (Cleary, 1963, p. 327). The author concluded that the best way for educators to get involved in policymaking is through education lobbying organizations.

However, educators may be reluctant to express political views due to court decisions and pressure from school administrators. Wohl (2009) wrote that since 1960, federal court rulings have narrowed teachers’ First Amendment right to free speech (p. 1319). He found that while teacher unions are attacked on ideological grounds, they have “essential dignity and professionalism, as well as on-the-job protections to a professional

that had few such protections and was often treated arbitrarily and abusively by administrators” (p. 1314).

Pressure from school administrators may be one reason South Carolina’s teachers are not more politically proactive. Staff members at the Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention and Advancement (CERRA) at Winthrop University reported that at a meeting of South Carolina’s teachers of the year, the most prevalent reason that educators gave for their reluctance to become politically involved was concern over the reaction of their administrators (personal communication, July, 2011).

#### **2.3.4 Political engagement through voting.**

##### *South Carolina educators and voting.*

The most fundamental way a citizen can participate in the political process is through the ballot box. Registering to vote and voting in local, state, and national elections is a direct way citizens can influence policymakers. However, a 2009 study found South Carolina’s teachers are not engaged in the voting process.

RISESC, a non-profit public school advocacy group, conducted a study of voting participation by the state’s certified teachers in the 2006 statewide elections, which included races for governor and state superintendent of education (<http://www.risesc.org/>). Data showed 47.4% of teachers voted in the 2006 election, 22.4% were registered but did not vote, and 30.1% were not registered. Consequently, over half of the state’s teachers either chose not to vote in the 2006 elections or could not because they were not registered to vote.

Although the votes of all citizens are important, it could be said that the outcome of elections weigh particularly heavy on those employed in the public sector. Public employees, who directly derive their livelihoods from all levels of government, may bear

the brunt of policies directed at their professions. This is particularly true for teachers, as stricter requirements on curriculum standards, student testing, and teacher evaluation are imposed at the state and federal levels. Unlike most states, South Carolina law prohibits collective bargaining by public employees. However, the state's educators may join two state associations that monitor school policy development, provide emailed legislative updates, and lobby at the Statehouse on their behalf. These associations are the Palmetto State Teachers Association (PSTA) and the South Carolina Education Association (SCEA), an affiliate of the National Education Association (NEA).

However, the number of teachers joining these associations, which require yearly dues, is small compared to the number of public school teachers statewide. In 2011, the SCEA had 11,000 members (J. Hick, personal communication, April, 2011). The PSTA had 6,800 members (T. Lewis, personal communication, April, 2011). Combined, the associations represented 17,800 teachers statewide, or 36.8% of certified teachers.

Even without union representation, teachers can be a powerful political force through the sheer number of members belonging to a teacher association. This was demonstrated in July, 2010 when the Alabama Education Association (AEA) defeated a candidate in the Republican gubernatorial primary due to his opposition to the association's education proposals. The AEA-backed candidate went on to win the governorship ([http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/state\\_edwatch/2010/07/](http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/state_edwatch/2010/07/)).

Like South Carolina, Alabama law prohibits collective bargaining by state employees. However, the AEA had far greater membership numbers than South Carolina's teacher associations. Although there were 47,500 certified teachers in Alabama in 2010, the AEA had 104,000 members. This strongly suggests that in addition

to current and retired teachers, Alabama public education supporters were also members of the AEA, adding to its political clout.

### ***National voting patterns.***

Data from a number of national studies and surveys indicated a little over half of the nation's eligible voters cast a ballot in the November 2004 national elections. The largest portion of those voting were college-educated woman (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). Subsequent analysis found that the most predominant reason eligible voters did not vote was because "policymakers don't care what I say" (Stein & Owens, 2005). While respondents said it was not difficult for them to register, those surveyed said that they either were "too busy" to register and vote or uninterested in the political system. Surveys also indicated the higher the education level, the higher the percentage of those registered to vote and voting in elections.

In addition to feeling overlooked in education policy development, national survey data indicated public school teachers said they felt blamed when education problems surface. Other studies showed that teachers had little understanding of what civic engagement entailed, a finding that might shed light on the 2009 study of South Carolina educators' voting participation.

### ***Influences on voters participation.***

Many think American citizens vote out of a sense of patriotic duty. Yet, research has shown it is the frequency of political discussions and the influence of groups that bring voters to the ballot box. In the 2005 study *Interests, Parties, and Social Embeddedness: Why Rational People Vote*, Abrams, Iversen and Soskice found that the best predictor of voting behavior is "interpersonal discussion networks." These networks

included family, close friends, coworkers, and social groups. According to the study, group interactions nurtured an interest in political discussions. These interactions also promoted “an important source of respect and standing in the groups and networks to which people belong” (Abrams, Iversen & Soskice, 2005, p. 2).

According to the study, political groups increased their influence by establishing themselves as “elites,” giving voters the incentive to learn about party candidates and to vote. However, Abrams, Iversen and Soskice (2005) stated that the incentive to vote “depends on the strength of collective organizations, such as parties, unions, and churches” (p. 10). Therefore, the authors concluded that the strongest predictor of voting is “whether politics is discussed” (p. 16).

Do people vote in their own best interest? In *An Exploration of Correct Voting in Recent U.S. Presidential Elections*, Lau, Andersen and Redlawsk (2008) found that about three-fourths of citizens voted “correctly,” only if they had “a fully informed preference” (p. 406). By “correct” voting, the authors meant citizens voting for candidates who would carry out policies that the voters support and will be to their benefit. “For democracy to work the way it is supposed to, citizens must also vote for the candidate, or party, who best represents their interests and concerns” (Lau, Andersen & Redlawsk, 2008, p. 405).

The study found “correct” voting depended on political knowledge, interest in politics, distinct differences between the candidates, and group affiliations, especially participation in party politics. Many of these variables mirrored the findings of Abrams, Iversen and Soskice (2005) that asserted likely voters are those involved with a group that discusses political issues.

***Voting and registration by election year, participation and gender.***

Despite 2006 being an off-year election, the U.S. Census Bureau reported some 96 million people voted in that year's congressional and statewide elections, an increase of 7 million voters over the 2002 off-year election. While national election years turn out the greatest number of voters, the Census Bureau noted that 48% of the nation's voting age population voted in 2006, the highest level since 1994 when the bureau began collecting voting data (<http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases>). While men (69.1%) and women (72.8%) are about equal in voter registration on the national, state, and county levels, more women (53.1%) voted than men (46.9%) in 2006.

An examination of U.S. Census Bureau data showed that South Carolina was close to the national average in the number of people registered and voting in the 2006 elections. In the U.S., an average of 68% of the voting age population were registered to vote, and 71% of those registered voted in the 2006 elections (<http://www.census.gov>). This meant a third of the nation's voters were not registered, slightly higher than the 29% of non-registered voters in South Carolina. However, the Bureau noted that registration and voting rates are "historically lower" in off-year elections, compared to presidential election years. As in South Carolina, about half of the states had both congressional and gubernatorial elections in 2006.

***Voting participation by education level and/or profession.***

National voting analysts point out that the higher the education level of the voter, the higher the percentage of those who are registered and vote. The reverse is true of those with a high school degree, GED, or no degree. The less the education, the less likely the person will vote. In the 2006 off-year election, 78% of those holding a

bachelor's degree or above were registered to vote, and 61% voted, according to government statistics.

There is limited research comparing voter participation among professions. However, two studies were found that speak to this issue. A study published by the Society of General Internal Medicine showed doctors voted less frequently than lawyers or the general public in both national and off-year elections (Grande, Asche & Armstrong, 2007). In the 2002 off-year elections, a third of the country's doctors voted compared to 54% of lawyers, and 42% of the general public (Grande, Asche & Armstrong, 2007, p.587). According to a report by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, economics majors have strong political party identification and tend to make political donations, but that did not influence their decisions to vote in an election, (Allgood, Bosshardt, van der Klaauw & Watts, 2010). The study also found that students seeking a business degree were less likely to vote than those seeking a liberal arts degree (Allgood, Bosshardt, van der Klaauw & Watts, 2010, p. 23).

These findings seem to contradict data indicating education level and professional careers motivate voters to go to the polls. Therefore, the authors concluded, “[t]here is more to the story than simply ‘being educated’ -- so that what people study in college, or what they choose to study, is associated with their civic behaviors many years after they graduate” (Allgood, Bosshardt, van der Klaauw & Watts, 2010, p. 24).

***Reasons given as to why citizens do not register to vote.***

According to national statistics for the 2006 elections, the U.S. Census Bureau reported 32% of voting age citizens were not registered to vote, similar to the percentage of non-registered teachers in South Carolina. However, Census data also showed that

78% of citizens holding a college degree were registered to vote and 61% voted in the 2006 elections. In comparison, 69.8% of South Carolina's teachers were registered to vote in 2006 and 47.4% voted in the 2006 state elections.

In a 2006 national survey conducted by the Pew Research Center for The People and The Press (<http://www.people-press.org>), the most frequent reason given by voters who failed to register is that they are "too busy." Describing these non-registered citizens as "politically estranged," the researchers found that this group was the least interested in politics and the most likely to say "voting doesn't change things" (p. 4). They also concluded these Americans are "more socially isolated from other people." A quarter of the study's respondents had lived in their neighborhoods less than a year, and only 27% said that "people can be trusted."

Why do citizens fail to vote? Data suggested that it was not due to registration barriers. In an American National Election Study (ANES) for the 2008 election, 70% of the non-registered respondents said "it is not difficult for me to vote" (<http://www.electionstudies.org/nesguide/>). The ANES survey reported that there was no one dominant answer as to why the respondents did not register. Reasons split among "no time," recently moved, and no interest in politics (p. 4).

The ANES, based at the University of Michigan's Center for Political Studies, has tracked national voter trends since 1952. Its national surveys on the 2004 and 2008 presidential elections showed that only 11% of the respondents said they were not registered to vote in 2004 and 14% in 2008. This contrasted with the 2006 election data reported by the Census Bureau; however, it is important to note that ANES studies are

conducted during presidential election years when voter participation is significantly higher.

When examined by the gender of non-registered voters, the ANES study found 10% of women respondents said they were not registered in 2004 and 12% in 2008. By educational level, the survey reported that only 2% of the respondents with college degrees or above were not registered to vote in 2004. That percentage rose to 4% in the 2008 national election year.

***Reasons given as to why registered voters did not vote in 2006.***

Among democracies in the western world, the United States consistently has had the lowest voter turnout rate (Stein, Leighly & Owens, 2005). In a report to the Federal Election Commission (FEC) examining the 2004 presidential election data, research indicated that Americans voted out of habit, the “high status” of their education and standing in the community, and through social networking (Stein, Leighly & Owens, p. 3). In fact, the FEC study found that many people voted simply because “they were asked to vote by a candidate, political party, or friend” (p. 6). As indicated in previous data, high status and networking led to greater voter participation.

Along with higher educational levels, political efficacy – the belief that a citizen can influence the outcome of political decisions – also influenced people to vote, a finding previously cited in the 2008 Lau, Andersen & Redlawsk study. However, the FEC study did not find distrust in government as a reason registered voters decided not to vote (p. 5). Over time, Census Bureau data showed that registered voters, who decided not to vote, consistently said they were “too busy (to vote) or had a conflicting schedule.” Census data from the 2006 elections resulted in similar findings. Of the 27.3% of

registered voters who did not vote in the 2006 elections, “too busy” to vote or “not interested” were the most prevalent answers.

A Pew Institute report on the 2004 presidential election found similar responses. According to the 2006 Pew Research Center study, over half the registered voters, who did not vote in the 2004 election, said that they were not interested in politics. Seventy-six percent of the non-voters stated that they knew “little about the candidates,” and 42% said they “were bored by what goes on in D.C.” In contrast, 91% of regular voters said they were interested in politics, and 72% said they felt guilty if they do not vote, according to the Pew Center report.

According to the 2006 Census Bureau’s election survey, employment did not have a bearing on who voted. However, voters with a family income of \$50,000 or more were more likely to vote than families with lower incomes. The Census survey also indicated that geographic location had an impact on voter turnout. In the 2006 elections, those living in the South were less likely to vote than citizens in other areas of the country, according to the report.

One finding that surprised federal researchers was that households with children in the home were less likely to vote than those without children. Researchers found this remarkable since it was thought parents would have a more vested interest in voting due to the impact of public policy on the futures of their children.

### **2.3.5 Participation of women in policymaking and governance.**

#### ***Women in elected office.***

Since the Second Wave of the Feminist Movement in the 1970s, there are considerable data showing an increase in American women holding elected office.

Studies also showed that when women run for office, they were just as likely to win as their male opponents. Despite these positive findings, the United States lagged behind other western democracies in the number of women in elected office, both at the national and state levels.

According to Lawless and Fox (2005), data confirmed that males dominated U.S. political offices. Based on 2004 data, the authors pointed out that the United States ranked 57<sup>th</sup> world-wide in the percentage (14.9%) of women in national legislatures, below the global average of 15.6%. That same year, 84% of U.S. governors, 86% of big-city mayors, and 77% of state legislators were men. As a result, American women had few female role models in elected office. The question then became “Who are representatives of women? The short answer is men” (Childs & Lovenduski, 2013, p. 494).

This led McDonagh (2009) to label the U.S. a “laggard state,” due to the scarcity of women in elected office and the subsequent lack of maternal policies that women policymakers support. Furthermore, the low percentage of women officeholders had a “*symbolic impact on public attitude*” (author’s emphasis), McDonagh wrote (p. 18). She pointed out that not only did the U.S. lag other modern democracies in the percentage of women in office, no American woman had become president, compared to 44% in other contemporary democracies (p.119).

### ***Maternal governmental policies.***

Maternal policies are those which emphasis care and concern for society’s individuals. These are education, health care, assistance for the needy, among others.

When a government adopts maternal policies, it reinforces a woman's place and value in the policy making sphere.

The power of maternal public policy is "crucial" to determining public attitudes toward women as political leaders (McDonagh, p. 81). Also important is the number of women elected officials, and the role models they present that encourage more women to participate in the political policy sphere. According to McDonagh, elected office advances women from the private domain of women's clubs and political support groups to the public platform of policymaking (p. 97).

Of significance, the presence of women in elected office and the corresponding impact of maternal social policies extended to voter attitudes toward government and increased the likelihood that citizens will vote. (McDonagh, p. 99).

### ***The "gendered psyche."***

Lawless and Fox (2005) contended that the most significant factor in a woman's participation in politics and becoming a candidate for office was a gendered culture, which influenced her self-perception. The authors described that the reluctance of women to become part of the political sphere was due to the impact of a "gendered psyche."

The "gendered psyche" is not a natural instinct for women, Lawless and Fox stated. Rather, it is a social construction, produced by a number of social and psychological dynamics. These include a sexist environment, gender differences in defining political qualifications, and different yardsticks used by outside sources to gauge qualifications. One of the most inhibiting factors for women candidates is underestimating the worth of their own qualifications for office (Lawless & Fox, 2005, p. 117).

Due to the embedded patterns of gender socialization, Lawless and Fox (2005) found elected office was a “much less likely” choice for women, no matter their credentials. “The enduring effects of traditional gender socialization that transcends all generations make sweeping increases in women’s numeric (political) representation unlikely,” they concluded (p. 149). In addition, women candidates have stagnated with the waning activism of the 1980s Women’s Movement, and the declining number of women 40-years-old or younger, who expressed interest in seeking political office.

### ***Gender-based candidate recruitment.***

Male dominance in politics and governance adds to a woman’s hesitation. Traditionally, political parties have acted as gatekeepers for potential candidates. This is true of both the Democrat and Republican parties, although women candidates more often run as Democrats (Lawless & Fox, 2005, pp. 83-85). Good, old boy networks, particularly the political parties, encourage men to seek office, as does the masculine ethos of the political world. Kira Sanbonmatsu (2006) came to similar conclusions while studying female candidacy and political parties. Based on 2005 data gathered by the Council for American Women in Politics (CAWP), Sanbonmatsu focused on legislative elections in six case study states. Like Lawless and Fox (2005), Sanbonmatsu found that the major political parties were important gatekeepers when soliciting potential candidates for office.

With few women office holders, there are few role models for women candidates to follow. Nationally, 22.5% of all state legislators are women – only 9% in South Carolina. Therefore, male political networking dominated elections. Incumbency also played an important role in who gets elected. Studies indicated that 90% of incumbent

candidates are re-elected. With few women in legislative office, the strength of incumbency is another obstacle. Therefore, combining the dominance of men in state legislatures, the incumbency factor, and political party gatekeeping, women seeking legislative office face an uphill battle.

As Childs and Lovenduski (2013) wrote, the exclusion of women from politics “is ubiquitous, operated through layer upon layer of established male dominated institutions (not least, political parties) that are insulated by layer upon layer of formal and informal rules of exclusion” (p. 507).

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH DESIGN

#### 3.1 Methodological Orientation

According to Michael Crotty (1998), the purpose and objectives of research should determine methods and methodology. Whether a positivist approach or a constructivist approach is chosen, it is important that the methodology is consistently applied. Therefore, in selecting a research methodology, the aim of the research and the question to be explored is foundational. Like Crotty, Corrine Glesne (2006) agreed the purpose of the research required different approaches. The “predispositions” of quantitative and qualitative assist in determining the methodology chosen (p. 4).

According to Glesne, the research purpose of quantitative methodology is predictions, causal explanations, and generalizability. Therefore, the researcher maintains an objective, detached role, as social variables are identified and measured. On the other hand, qualitative methodology aims for understanding, interpretation, and contextualization. As opposed to a quantitative approach, qualitative research makes minimal use of numerical indices, instead employs descriptive write-ups (p. 5).

Harry F. Wolcott (1992) suggested that qualitative research methods should be thought of in “common everyday terms such as *watching*, *asking*, and what might be glossed as *reviewing*” (author’s emphasis, p. 19). Or, in more formal academic terms, observing, interviewing, and archival research.

Alan Peshkin (1993) further suggested that the outcomes of qualitative research can be broken down into four categories: description, interpretation, verification, and evaluation (p. 23). Peshkin further delineated these four categories into the outcomes of each approach. Of Peshkin's four qualitative categories and their outcomes, descriptive analysis lent itself best to the aim of this case study. According to Peshkin, descriptive analysis seeks to uncover the processes, relationships, setting and situations, systems, and people. Also, descriptive analysis meshed well with Wolcott's down-to-earth methods of watching, asking, and reviewing.

This case study focused on the grassroots experiences of public education supporters and their participation in South Carolina's 1984 school reform effort. Therefore, qualitative research methods were the best approach to explore citizens' motivations to embrace a cause and act within their communities to build support.

With this in mind, the tools open to qualitative researchers were the most productive method to gather data on the 1984 grassroots effort. These included interviews with participants, private and public documents, and archival material in the form of media coverage and opinion-editorial articles. These qualitative methods yielded a rich description of the 1984 EIA advocacy movement.

## **3.2 Research Approach**

### **3.2.1 Case study.**

Case study was the best approach to researching the 1984 EIA grassroots initiative because the case study approach results in an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of similar units (Gerring, 2004). It is a

“spatially bounded phenomenon” observed “at a single point of time or over some delimited period of time” (Gerring, 2004, p. 342).

As to the definition of a unit, Gerring divided them into formal units and informal units. A formal unit “is the unit chosen for intensive analysis – the person, group, organization, county, region, country, or other bounded phenomenon of which the writer has in-depth knowledge” (p. 344). The details provided by these cases are in the form of field notes, he wrote, and a study with narrow boundaries would be “more conducive to case study analysis than a proposition with a broad purview” (p. 346). One of the distinct benefits of the case study method is the depth of analysis it provides. “One may think of depth as referring to the detail, richness, completeness, wholeness, or degree of variance that is accounted for by an explanation” (Gerring, 2004, p. 348). According to Gerring, case studies are contextual in that they help explain a unique, historical event.

Uniqueness is one reason to select case study methodology. According to Robert E. Stake (1995), the “real business of case study is particularization. We take a particular case and come to know it well, not primarily as to how it is different from others, but what it is, what it does.” Case studies are not designed to produce generalizations, rather “the first emphasis is on understanding the case itself” (Stake, 1995, p.8).

R.K. Yin (2009) called case studies the “preferred” method when exploring the “how” or “why” of the research questions, and when the case focused on contemporary experiences over which the researcher had no control (p.2). Critical to case study research is the use of “multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion” (p. 2). According to Yin, the rationale for conducting a single case study was that the circumstances are unique and the findings revelatory (2009, p. 48).

A case study of the 1984 EIA initiative fit the case study criteria. It was a clearly bounded case both by topic and timeline. The research itself was framed by “how” questions, particularly how the statewide initiative was organized, and how barriers were overcome. It was unique both in contemporary South Carolina political history, and in the approaches used by other southern governors during the school reform movement in the 1980s. It revealed the tactics, motivations, realizations, and obstacles faced by organizers when building active public support at the local level without a coordinated, statewide organizational network to guide them.

### **3.2.2 Study Context**

In explaining the logic of case study design, Yin (2009) stated the research aims for an in-depth understanding of a real life phenomenon; however, the phenomenon must be understood within important contextual conditions, as these conditions are “highly pertinent” to the phenomenon of the study (p. 18). The complexity of any case study is “embedded in a number of contexts or backgrounds” (Stake, 2005, p. 449). These contexts may be historical, cultural, or physical, as well as social, economic, political, ethical, or aesthetic. The context, both political and economic, was fundamental to understanding the grassroots citizen mobilization in support of the 1984 EIA initiative.

The context of this case was rooted in the call for public school reform, both by the National Commission on Excellence in Education’s 1983 *A Nation At Risk* report and the 1981 report *The Need For Quality*, issued by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB). The SREB, an influential committee made up of southern governors, state legislators, and state education officials, began examining the impact of public education on economic development prior to the National Commission’s 1983 report. Publication of

*A Nation At Risk* bolstered the SREB's report and fueled the priority status southern governors gave to school reform as the key to economic growth.

In South Carolina, a 1980 political change strengthened the power of the governorship. South Carolina was, and continues to be, a legislature-dominated state with the state legislature controlling almost all aspects of policy making from budget allocations, appointments to state boards and commissions, election of judges, and control of local governments by a county's legislative delegation.

Further weakening the executive branch was the large number of elected statewide officials: lieutenant governor, secretary of state, treasurer, attorney general, comptroller general, education superintendent, adjutant general, and agriculture commissioner. While there were no term limits for members of the General Assembly or for statewide elected officials, South Carolina governors constitutionally were limited to one four-year term.

This changed in 1980 when Gov. Riley with the help of progressive legislators campaigned for a change in the S.C. Constitution, which would allow a governor a second successive term. In a statewide referendum, the constitutional amendment was passed, and when Riley was reelected in November 1982, he became South Carolina's first governor to serve for eight consecutive years from 1979 to 1987. "This victory had enormous implications for strengthening the governor's role in public policy-making. No longer was he simply a 'personality' occupying office, now he was governor for eight years, a period long enough to propose and implement programs" (Carter & Young, n.d.). In addition, a governor's reelection campaign could serve as a platform for a second term political agenda, tacitly implying approval by the voters if the governor was re-elected.

The 1980 change in the state Constitution coincided with the regional and national call for school reform. With Riley’s active promotion of school improvement during his first term, the election to a second term allowed him to continue placing public education as a top priority. This set the groundwork for developing the EIA and organizing the grassroots voter support necessary to pass the reform proposal and its tax increase funding during a legislative election year.

### **3.3 Participant Selection**

The criteria for those invited to take part in this case study was their first-hand knowledge and personal participation in the planning and implementation of the strategy to engage grassroots support for the EIA. These included:

- Former S.C. Governor and U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley
- Dr. Terry Peterson, education advisor to the Governor and U.S. Secretary of Education
- Bill Prince, political director during the Riley gubernatorial administration
- William Youngblood, Jr., chairman of the Business-Partnership Committee
- Former S.C. Senator Harry Chapman, chairman of the S.C. Senate Education Committee
- Vivian Watson, former president of the S.C. Education Association
- Dr. Elizabeth Gressette, former executive director of the Palmetto State Teachers Association
- Joe Grant, former legislative lobbyist for the S.C. Education Association
- Dr. Larry Winecoff and Dr. Conrad Powell, forum organizers
- Dr. Chester Floyd, retired school district superintendent

### **3.4 Data Collection Methods**

According to Harry F. Wolcott (1992), qualitative research is based on three information gathering techniques: experiencing, enquiring, and examining. Robert Stake (2005) suggested that multiple data collection methods increased an accurate interpretation of the case studied. This “redundancy of data collection” is termed triangulation, which is “the process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation” (R. Stake, 2005, p. 454).

Robert K. Yin (2009) explained this approach as validity construction. To construct case study validity, Yin recommended three methods: using multiple sources of evidence, establishing a chain of evidence, and have “key informants” review the draft of the case study (p. 41). These strategies result in “converging lines of inquiry,” thereby making the study more accurate as different sources of information provide corroboration of the findings (Yin, p. 116).

#### **3.4.1 Interviews.**

To further the search for understanding, qualitative researchers separate what is happening in “key episodes or testimonies” from those “presenting these episodes with their own interpretation and narratives” (R.E. Stake, 1995, p. 40). Qualitative research uses narratives “to optimize the opportunity of the reader to gain experiential understanding of the case.”

Along with the careful selection of those who could provide rich details of their experiences with the EIA movement, open-ended questions were used to explore their narratives. As previously noted in the discussion of case study and qualitative research

methods, these questions sought information as to the “what” and “how” of the interviewee’s experience.

Specific interview questions included:

- 1) How were you or your organization involved in the strategy to build support for passage of the 1984 S.C. Education Improvement Act?
- 2) What strategies did you or your organization employ to build educator, legislative, business, and citizen support for passage of the legislation?
- 3) What obstacles did you or your organization encounter when organizing and implementing this support effort?
- 4) In your opinion, what was the most effective strategy used to win legislative approval?
- 5) In your opinion, what was the impact of citizen engagement on passage of the legislation?

Follow-up questions were used to encourage the interviewee to expand on his or her observations. The interviews were conducted at a place and time convenient to the participant.

Interview requests were made by email. When requesting an interview, the participants were informed that the session would be digitally recorded and later transcribed by the researcher. Interviewees also were advised in writing that information or opinions expressed during the interview might be directly quoted and attributed to them by name as part of the written dissertation. These stipulations were repeated in follow-up confirmation emails.

In order to verify the accuracy of a quotation and its context, each participant was given the opportunity to read and comment on the section or sections of the case study in which they were quoted. Specifically, each was asked to examine the section to ensure the accuracy of the quotation and interpretation of their comments. This member checking was essential to the validity of the researcher's understanding and presentation of the interviewees' statements.

By return email, the participants either approved their statements as accurate or edited the section to better reflect their thinking. If there were corrections, the changes were copied into the dissertation document with no alternation by the researcher. The member checking protocol and digital recordings of the interviews were used to ensure the accuracy of the narratives, reflections, and opinions of the participants interviewed.

### **3.4.2 Document collection.**

In addition to in-depth interviews, both public and private documents were an important source of the research findings. Collected data included the examination of news accounts, public documents, business and association communications, and public relations material used during the EIA initiative. Most of the documents examined were from the Riley gubernatorial administration files, housed at the S.C. Department of Archives and History. Additional articles and documents were accessed through public or academic databases.

The private papers of some interviewees were made available for this case study. These included internal memoranda, organizational charts, drafts of speeches, press releases, publicity literature, videotapes, background information, and personal written reflections.

Document review is an important facet of triangulation. Public documents are valuable to qualitative research methods because they can contribute a more objective account of events, as well as fill in faulty or faded memories of interview participants. According to Stake (1995), documents can serve as “substitutes” for activities the researcher could not observe directly. Additionally, documents may provide more precise information than either the case study participants or the researcher can. This was true in researching this case study.

To support objectivity in the research and findings, news accounts and editorials from 1983 through 1984 were used. These news accounts and editorials were from South Carolina’s daily and weekly newspapers and some out-of-state newspapers, such as *The Charlotte Observer*, *The New York Times*, and *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. Since most newspapers in the 1980s had morning and afternoon editions, each edition from the same city had separate reporters and editorial boards. This allowed a wide variety of reporting perspectives on the EIA.

While some news articles were found through electronic databases, most were found in copies of the Governor’s News Summary from the Riley administration files at state Archives. (Richard W. Riley Gubernatorial Papers (1979-1987). News Summaries. (S554026, July 1983– September 1984). South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia S.C. Retrieved July 24, 2014 – October 15, 2014.)

The news summaries were produced daily by members of the Riley Press Office, including the researcher, from daily and weekly newspapers and distributed to the governor and senior staff members. All articles and editorials on local, state, and national issues were included in the summaries, whether or not they reflected positively or

negatively on the Riley administration. The news summaries were a valuable research source for this case study for three reasons.

First, articles included in the summaries were not limited to public education but focused on important local, state, and national issues, giving greater context to the EIA effort. Next, the summaries included articles from newspapers no longer readily accessible in print or digital format. Third, the articles provided objective content for the study, particularly the editorials and op-ed columns.

Providing a negative case analysis was essential to this study, not only to balance information from the interviewees, but also to counteract the researcher's subjectivity while researching and writing the case study. Early in the research, it became apparent that locating and interviewing individuals to support a negative case analysis would be difficult. Because the EIA reform movement is over three decades ago, many of the opposing key legislators and businessmen are dead. In addition, some interviewees declined to be interviewed, citing faulty memories of the period. Therefore, the news articles and editorials provided an important counterbalance to interviews of EIA supporters, as well as questions regarding the researcher's trustworthiness.

### **3.4.3 Historical/Contextual Research**

Historical context adds to the understanding of case study phenomenon. As previously noted, academic articles, government reports, political studies, media accounts of the 1980 national public education reform movement and school improvement activities of southern governors were examined for this case study. School improvement efforts in other southern states were useful when contrasting the lobbying efforts and

reform proposals advanced by other southern governors to Riley's grassroots mobilization approach.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

#### **3.5.1 Individual case analysis.**

When creating a case study database, Yin (2009) recommended that the case study "should have enough data to allow the reader an independent judgment," thereby, increasing the study's reliability (p. 119). A case study database should consist of documents and narratives developed by open-ended interview questions.

To maintain the reliability of the data, Yin stated that a chain of evidence should be maintained to allow the reader to trace back through the study's evidence after reading the conclusion (p.122). This audit trail should consist of actual written case notes, transcriptions, and corroborating documents. Also, there must be sufficient citations to strengthen the claim of reliability through triangulation.

Qualitative case study data analysis is based on the sociological tradition of thematic analysis, which involves coding the gathered data around themes, then separating the coding into data "clumps" for further analysis (Glesne, 2006). These generic categories can be people, dates, events, interview narratives, and documents. Through this initial coding exercise, theme consistencies should emerge.

Preliminary coding of the interview transcripts can be further examined through in vivo coding to maintain the authentic voices of those interviewed. When using the in vivo coding method, specific verbatim phrases are lifted from transcribed interviews. This results in numerous phrase codes essential to revealing theme patterns from the interviews.

Throughout the coding process, Glesne (2006) recommended the researcher write research memos about what is seen in the data, no matter how preliminary the coding may be. “The comments and thoughts recorded in field log entries as memos are links across your data that find their way into analytic files” (p. 148). In addition, Glesne endorsed reflexive memos to monitor subjectivity, keeping the researcher “attuned to the outlook that shapes your data analysis” (p. 148).

### **3.5.2 Interview coding methods.**

Following Glesne’s advice (2006) that noting possible themes cannot begin too early, transcribing the interviews of my participants generated potential coding categories from the beginning. The six interview questions served as broad categories under which potential themes were organized. These overarching, question-based categories were: initial strategies, organizing strategies, citizen engagement, sustaining momentum, most effective engagement strategy, and citizen impact. As potential themes emerged from the interviews, they were organized under the six broad categories.

The use of in vivo coding was the first method used to analyze each transcript. Pertinent quotes were either paraphrased or directly quoted in a comment to the side of the written transcript. The in vivo comments were analyzed, then classified under the six broad question-based categories. Once classified, the comment would be reduced into an abbreviated theme. For instance, an interview quote might fall under the “initial strategy” category. This comment would be coded “Initial,” followed by a code of not more than four words.

After the transcripts were coded by broad categories, in vivo comments, and narrower theme, each category code was transferred to an Excel spreadsheet, which listed

the interviewee, the in vivo comment, and the abbreviated theme. Since each spreadsheet was limited to one of the six question categories, the spreadsheets served to confirm or expand themes and to expose additional themes.

### **3.5.3 Document coding methods**

As previously described, broad subject categories were used when coding interviews for the case study. These same broad categories were applied to the media articles, archival documents, and EIA correspondence and memorandum from the Riley gubernatorial files. In addition to articles, reports, and memoranda gathered from private collections, over 640 news articles, editorials, op-ed columns, and letters to the editor relating to the EIA reform effort were examined. Also studied were archival documents from EIA support groups, as well as Riley's EIA correspondence.

After summarizing each news article by month, the article summaries were divided into categories based on subject area. Included were categories on educator response, public participation, polling, regional forums, opposition groups, pro and con editorials, southern school reform, among others. Dividing the article summaries by subject facilitated analysis when comparing information from the news articles and editorials to information from interviews and other documents.

### **3.5.4 Memo writing**

Potential themes and connections to theory became apparent from the beginning of the transcription process. Using the interview questions as a guideline, I kept handwritten notes of repetitive themes as they appeared in the interviews. After transcribing all interviews, I began reviewing my interview memos for recurring themes and connections to my theoretical framework. Although some of the preliminary themes

noted in the memos did not hold up under the more detailed data analysis, they served to organize my thinking, allowed a preview to possible thematic codes, as well as a valuable preliminary alignment with theory.

### **3.6 Methodological Considerations**

#### **3.6.1 Trustworthiness.**

Validity of the research cannot be considered at the end of the study, it must be considered every step of the way (Glesne, 2006). She cited J.W. Creswell's (1998) eight verification procedures as pertinent to case study research: prolonged engagement and persistent observation; peer review and debriefing; triangulation; negative case analysis; clarification of the researcher's bias; member checking; thick, rich description, and external audit (p. 37). Although Glesne said that all eight of the procedures are not necessary to ensure the trustworthiness of a study, they are important to consider during research undertakings (p. 38).

Yin (2009) stated that the validity of a qualitative study should be like an audit trail. The reader of the study should be able to trace the researcher's conclusions cited through the interviews, documents, field notes, and analysis memos written during the research process. This should result in a convergence of the evidence, so that conclusions are not based on singular, linear findings -- for example, from participant interviews only or public documents only. By carefully citing a broad variation of evidence, the audit trail is established and can be verified by an outside source.

Triangular protocols should be a search for additional meaning, rather than just a single viewpoint (Stake, 1995). Therefore, multiple interviews, member checking,

document research, and outside reader review can result in many different interpretations to be considered by the researcher.

In building triangulation for this case study, I used the practices described above. Multiple interviews were conducted with participants. The interviewees reviewed the documents for accurate quotations and correct interpretations. Numerous news articles were read, summarized and categorized to provide an objective history of the EIA initiative. A wide array of public and private documents were examined, and when taken together with the interviews and news articles, provided a detailed, description of the effort. From the beginning, research memos were kept to track possible themes, theory connections, or issues needing further investigation. A great deal of help was given by members of my dissertation committee, regarding data gathering and organization, as well as the best use of qualitative research methods.

Ultimately, I followed Wolcott's (1992) advice to qualitative researchers: when in doubt "tell the truth" (p. 44). Although this sounds simplistic, it served as valuable guidance when researching and writing this case study. As Wolcott (1992, p. 44) counseled:

- "Tell what you saw (and asked about and saw in the works of others)"
- Maintain "an objective eye for your own objectivity"
- Describe your data collection methods accurately and adequately in an understandable, straight-forward manner
- In the same manner, explain the ideas that guided your research, and how they may have altered in the course of the research
- Describe the role of theory.

Taken together, Wolcott's methods were drawn upon throughout this case study and support its trustworthiness.

### **3.6.2 Role of the researcher.**

As previously established, my interest in this case study arose from my own experiences with South Carolina school policy-making as a Statehouse journalist, a staff member in the Riley administration, a public school teacher, and as an education policy advocate. In one light, these experiences over a 30 year period can be seen as valuable in understanding the political context and historical timeline as it relates to this study. However, these experiences also call into question my subjectivity as the researcher.

Citing the definition of "subjectivity" in *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, Alan Peshkin (1988) wrote that subjectivity is the quality of the investigator that may affect the outcome of an investigation. Peshkin believed subjectivity arose in all aspects of the research process, but of importance was the systematic acknowledgement of this fact by the researcher during the course of the study. At the very least, Peshkin (1988) stated that researchers should "disclose to their readers where self and subject became joined" (p.17).

Having experienced subjectivity bias in his own research, Peshkin (1988) recommended researchers audit their research, looking for "Subjective I's." He wrote, "By monitoring myself, I can create an illuminating, empowering, personal statement that attunes me to where self and subject are intertwined" (1988, p. 20).

Adopting Peshkin's approach, there were a number of "Subjective I's" I monitored during this case study. One was my "Personal Investment I." Having been closely involved in the EIA initiative, it would be to my personal advantage to convey it

in the most flattering light. Some of the EIA’s messages were crafted through my writing under the guidance of Riley’s education and political advisors. Understandably, I am proud of this involvement. However, knowing a sense of personal achievement must be checked, I was particularly thorough when examining records and documents that gave the most unbiased approach or a contrary stance.

These articles, particularly the editorials, were used extensively throughout the case study to counterbalance the impression that the Riley plan had no opposition or any tension among the supporting groups. I specifically included articles and documents to serve as a negative case analysis, particularly since it proved difficult to interview staunch opponents of the EIA plan, as previously explained.

Most opposition to the EIA was directed at the one cent sales tax increase and the proposed increase in teacher pay. Internally, tension between the two teacher associations also occurred. In writing this case study, I specifically included statements from opposition groups and negative editorials written about the tax increase and the proposed teacher pay. In addition, the obstacles section of the Findings chapter specifically addressed these issues.

My “Legacy I” also could be a possible source of bias. The “Legacy I” would be my tendency to maintain and bolster the reputation and achievements of a public elected official I admire and those who assisted him. I was especially cognizant of this when interviewing the participants in this case study. My experience as a former journalist assisted in asking follow-up questions to yield better, more detailed explanations. Also, having read 15 months of media articles on the EIA, I was able to focus the interviews on the details of the EIA efforts, especially questioning the obstacles that arose.

During the researching and writing of this case study, I was very aware of my various subjectivities. Consequently, I may have avoided using some articles, editorials, op-ed columns, or national comments praising the role played by Gov. Riley or the achievements of the EIA. This was done under an abundance of caution and may be criticized by those who witnessed and supported the campaign and public engagement endeavor.

Due to my concerns about the current state of public education in South Carolina, I also was conscious of my “Activist/Political I.” In order to mitigate that stance, I limited data collection to 1983 through 1984, the specific years of the EIA effort. Also excluded were any interview questions seeking the opinions of participants regarding current state school policy or politics. In a like manner, there were no individuals interviewed who did not participate directly in the EIA reform movement.

As a former journalist, I consciously relied on my ability to record, question, analyze, and write objectively throughout this case study and strove to maintain “an objective eye for your own objectivity,” as Wolcott stated (1992, p. 44).

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

This case study describes the construction of an unprecedented statewide citizen network to actively promote passage of Gov. Dick Riley's signature school reform bill before the S.C. General Assembly. This chapter examines how the grassroots effort was built and legislative passage accomplished with research gathered from interviews, published and internal staff documents, archival material, news accounts, and editorials.

Construction of any project requires a specific plan, following a logical progression of steps. Building a grassroots network from the ground up is no different. So it was with Riley's EIA proposal. Activities were deliberately designed to activate a statewide citizen support network aimed at pressuring the state Legislature to enact the reform plan and a one cent sales tax increase. Methodical planning of this grassroots effort was particularly important because no such voter-based statewide network existed in South Carolina. Strong, active citizen engagement would be critical in a legislative election year.

To investigate the process of building the EIA grassroots movement, I used a chronological approach in the interviews. To present the findings that emerged, I employed a thematic approach. The questions and themes addressed were:

1. Initial strategies for passage of the EIA
2. Organizing the grassroots lobbying effort
3. Engaging citizen support throughout the state

4. Sustaining grassroots lobbying through the legislative session
5. Obstacles encountered in building and sustaining citizen activism
6. The most effective lobbying strategies
7. The impact of citizen engagement on the bill's passage.

These broad themes arose from the interview transcripts, as well as news articles and other documents published during the time the EIA effort was planned and executed.

#### **4.1 Initial Strategies for Passage of the Education Improvement Act of 1984**

Planning for the EIA effort began in the summer of 1983 in the aftermath of a legislative defeat. During the 1983 session, the Legislature faced a significant budget deficit, resulting from an economic downturn. Riley proposed an increase in the state's 4 cents sales tax to be divided between public education and property tax relief. This split funding approach did not attract enough legislative support and failed to win passage.

Lessons learned from that unsuccessful attempt helped shape the strategy for the next push for education reform. Riley and his senior staff designed a three-pronged plan deemed critical to the successful passage and funding of the new school reform initiative. These three elements were: to actively engage the public in the effort, to focus the role of the governor on one issue, and to build statewide momentum generated by the nationwide education reform movement. This section discusses these three components.

##### **4.1.1 Public involvement.**

Any election significantly raises the profile of the winning candidate, and this was true of Dick Riley. However, the November 1982 election of Dick Riley was particularly notable because Riley was South Carolina's first two-term governor. In 1980, a statewide referendum amended the state Constitution to allow a governor to serve two consecutive

four year terms. The election of the first two-term governor not only raised Riley's public profile, generating a statewide coalition of campaign supporters, but also gave Riley an additional four years to complete his legislative agenda.

The agenda of Riley's first term was not limited to addressing the persistently low national rankings of South Carolina's schools, but also pressing environmental and health issues. Disposal of out-of-state nuclear and hazardous waste was persistent in South Carolina, which was labeled the nation's "dumping ground." Also important to Riley were health care issues plaguing the poor, particularly the state's high rate of infant mortality.

While these issues had devoted supporters, none had the same potential for statewide public interest as school reform. Riley's legislative efforts during the 1983 legislative session already had given the issue prominence. Reports, such as *A Nation At Risk*, generated national discussions linking economic growth to better public schools.

In the aftermath of the governor's 1983 school reform defeat, Riley's senior assistants decided the best path to success was not just coordinating support from established Statehouse education lobbyists, but also building a statewide citizen network to promote the need for improvement in their community schools with their legislators. This public grassroots network would not just include educators, but also parents and community leaders, who recognized the connection between good schools, good jobs, and good community quality of life.

In the summer of 1983, top aides to Gov. Riley determined that strong public involvement would be key to pressuring the General Assembly to act on education reform. Although South Carolina is a legislatively-dominated state, the governor could

use the “bully pulpit” of his office to promote the issue, combining it with an effective coalition of political supporters, educators, and the voting public.

This coalition is what Riley education advisor Terry Peterson labeled a “grassroots/grass tops” strategy, building strength from the bottom up and the top down with both groups having significant input (personal communication, September 4, 2015). Despite the grass tops element, this effort is widely considered a “grassroots model.” Political scientist William Chance (1986) described this engagement strategy as the “T-formation,” with the governor, state superintendent of education and the Legislature at the top of the T, drawing up activism from local coalitions of educators, community leaders, business interests, and an active public (p. 33). Chance (1986) stated that the “most important dynamic for the vertical coalition was downward through implementation councils to convey and interpret the state policy initiatives to the localities” (p. 33).

Involving the public in the legislative process was a new approach for the Riley administration. However, to build the kind of constituent pressure needed to convince the General Assembly that school improvement and funding were needed, mobilizing voters was critical. To foster sustained engagement, it would be necessary for the public “to take ownership of it.”

You would make the policy itself strong, and you would make the public grassroots effort stronger. So, from day one, we structured a whole strategy that the public was going to be involved not only in lobbying, but we were going to involve them in the actual recommendations, and getting their input. (B. Prince, personal communication, August 5, 2015)

This strategy – encouraging citizen input and ownership -- would become important building blocks of the EIA grassroots movement.

#### **4.1.2 The role of the governor.**

With the need for widespread public engagement, Gov. Riley’s high profile participation in the passage of school reform legislation was vital to activating and sustaining citizen involvement.

In the summer of 1983, the role Riley would assume was developed by two senior staff members, political director Bill Prince and legislative liaison Dwight Drake. Promoting the EIA would be a campaign-like effort with sole focus on the school reform bill. They believed it was essential that the governor give his full attention to the reform plan as it was developed, promoted, and pushed in the Legislature.

Following the summer meeting of the Education Commission of the States (ECS), Drake and Prince wrote an internal memorandum to Riley. The July 25, 1983 memo outlined what would be required of the governor and his staff if a school reform plan was to be successful during the following legislative session. Labeling it a “plan of action,” the two senior staff members wrote that it would “take a commitment and effort far beyond anything we have done since you have been in office” (D. Drake and B. Prince, personal communication, July 25, 1983. Copy in possession of Terry Peterson).

Prior to the memo, Riley had established two blue ribbon committees to examine the education needs of the state. One was the Partnership among Business/Industry, the Legislature and the Public Schools. Comprised of influential business leaders and legislators, it was chaired by Riley and S.C. Superintendent of Education Charlie

Williams. The committee's task was to oversee school improvement recommendations and promote them with the business community.

The governor assigned a more specific job to the Committee on Financing Excellence in the Public Schools, chaired by Greenville, S.C. financier William Page. This group would draft a school reform plan and determine a way to fund it. This committee report would be the groundwork of Riley's recommendations to the General Assembly.

However, in order to secure legislative approval for reform legislation and its funding, Drake and Prince recommended that the governor's office "mount an intensive campaign in support of improved public schools. Our overall goal is to build public support, which will ultimately translate into legislative support" (D. Drake and B. Prince, personal communication, July 25, 1983).

Drake and Prince's first "and most important" recommendation made to Riley was "a commitment by you that virtually all of your time for the next nine months will be spent on education" (personal communication, July 25, 1983). The aim was to make Riley "a kind of one-note Johnny" for school improvement (B. Prince, personal communication, August 5, 2015).

The memo also recommended that the governor ask his staff to support his sole focus stance and "to shoulder a greater burden during the coming months" by handling issues other than education "without involving you or taking up your time" (D. Drake and B. Prince, personal communication, July 25, 1983). The decision to limit Riley's time and energy specifically to school reform created some tension among the governor's staff members since it relegated other state-level issues to the backburner for a year. With

some reluctance, gubernatorial aides accepted this single-minded strategy, understanding their policy issues would receive much less attention from Riley.

Riley's singular focus on school reform became evident to the media prior to recommendations from the two Blue Ribbon committees or the formal announcements of public forums to build citizen support. "In recent months, Riley has increased his efforts in public education, making a pitch for improvements in nearly every public statement" (Sayles, 1982, August 24, p. 8C). This local focus aligned with a broader national trend.

#### **4.1.3 National education reform movement.**

The plan to build public momentum for improving South Carolina's low ranking public schools was boosted by the national discussion surrounding the impact of education on economic growth. The conclusion of the National Commission on Excellence in Education's 1983 report *A Nation At Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* captured the country's attention. The commission claimed that America's economic prosperity was threatened by an increasingly mediocre public school system and the students it produced. As an example, the report pointed to the booming economy of Japan and the wide academic achievement gap between Japanese and American students.

*A Nation At Risk* couched its conclusions in economic terms. Consequently, both business and education felt the urgency for reform. In addition to *A Nation At Risk*, the U.S. Department of Education also issued a report on the ten states with the lowest per pupil funding, linking low funding with the highest national dropout rates and the lowest college entrance examination scores. Seven of the ten were in the South, including South Carolina, Louisiana, Alabama, Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia and Mississippi. At that

time, South Carolina ranked 47<sup>th</sup> in high school graduation rates, 44<sup>th</sup> in teacher salaries, and 43<sup>rd</sup> in per pupil funding.

Despite the stir caused by both reports, neither the federal government nor national commissions led the charge for change. It was the states, and more significantly, the southern states. Concern among governors in the South did not arise solely from the 1983 federal reports. There were prior school improvement studies, many of which came from state-based task forces. Among these were the ECS' 1983 report *Action For Excellence* and the Southern Regional Education Board's (SREB) 1981 study *The Need For Quality*.

The SREB report built a sense of urgency among southern governors. States in the Deep South consistently ranked in the bottom ten in high school graduation rates, teacher pay, per pupil funding, and test scores. Reinforcing the dismal education rankings were equally poor wage levels, job creation, and low per capita income rankings. "I think the South is further ahead in proposing education reform because they are the furthest behind," said Mark Musick, SREB executive director (Schmidt, W.E., 1984, January 11, p. 1A, 9A). Consequently, school improvement already was at the top of many gubernatorial priority lists.

As reported in *The New York Times*, the southern states were devising school improvements plans more than any other region in the country (Schmidt, 1984, January 11, p. 1A, 9A). Most of these proposals called for sales tax increases, the education funding method most used by southern states. This was true in South Carolina with Riley proposing a sales tax increase from 4 to 5 cents to pay for school improvements. In Arkansas, the legislature paid for Governor Bill Clinton's school reform plan by

increasing the state's 3 cents sales tax to 4 cents, the largest tax increase in Arkansas' history. After two legislative defeats, Tennessee Governor Lamar Alexander's Better Schools program raised the state's sales tax from 4.5 percent to 5.4 percent.

Southern governors also called their state Legislatures into special sessions to pressure lawmakers to act on school reform. This tactic was used by Alexander, Florida Governor Robert Graham, and Mississippi Governor William Winter. To add urgency to William's push for action on his education plan, he called the special legislative session right before Christmas in December 1982, an approach that led to quick legislative approval after two prior defeats.

Due to his early efforts at school reform, Winter was considered the "vanguard" of southern education reform governors (Hansen, 1984, January 22, p.6S). Mississippi was at the bottom of every national education list, as well every economic indicator. When Winter learned that a company rejected locating in Mississippi because executives feared the state could not produce enough skilled workers due to its low education rankings, the governor launched his 1980 school improvement initiative (Hansen, 1984, January 22).

The Winter strategy was to gain business support by linking economic development with better schools. Educators were brought on board with the promise of increased funding and pay raises. To gain public support for passage, Winter and his wife Elise traveled throughout Mississippi, conducting nine citizen forums to convince the public of the need for school improvement and the taxes to fund it. It was "not unlike conducting a political campaign" (Hansen, 1984, January 22, p. 6S).

Acknowledging the power of citizen involvement to overcome legislators' reluctance, Riley adopted the William Winter school campaign strategy as he planned a

new push for school improvement following the 1983 legislative defeat of his reform proposal.

#### **4.1.4 Lessons from Mississippi**

As the 1983 session wound down, Riley and his senior staff began planning for the 1984 legislative foray for education. With governors across the South struggling with legislatures to reform and fund public education, there were lessons to be learned from their successes and failures. At the close of the 1983 session, Riley and his senior staff contacted the Mississippi Governor's Office to discuss the Winter strategy.

It took the Mississippi governor three attempts to pass his reform bill, which proposed statewide kindergarten, compulsory education, teacher pay raises, and student testing among other improvements. Funding came from a one cent sales tax increase and raises in corporate and individual taxes. It was the largest tax hike in Mississippi's history. However, success was not achieved until public activism pressured state lawmakers to pass the reforms and tax increases. The necessity of citizen engagement was crucial advice that Winter passed on to Riley.

Traveling to Jackson, Mississippi, Riley's education advisor Terry Peterson and legislative liaison Dwight Drake met with Winter's advisors, who offered hard-earned lessons from their school reform battles with Mississippi lawmakers. While the campaign-like approach had succeeded, Winter's staff described what they believed were fundamental mistakes made when first initiating the effort. The most critical was lack of public involvement in developing the proposal.

With statewide kindergarten the centerpiece of the proposal, the governor's office brought together early childhood experts and other educators to devise the plan.

According to Peterson, “They said if you’re going to do something big, don’t go out with a canned plan until you get lots and lots of input from people” (personal communication, September 3, 2015).

Because the school plan was put together by the governor’s staff, the State Department of Education, and academic experts, the public felt little ownership of the proposal. “The local people, the local teachers, parents might have liked kindergarten, but they had no input into what the kindergarten proposal was going to look like. People felt like the state leaders were jamming it down the local’s throats because the proposal was already put together, even though they liked their state leaders” (T. Peterson, personal communication, September 4, 2015).

The Mississippi experience cemented the importance of public input from the beginning. This established the underlying philosophy of the Riley reform effort – public ownership would lead to public activism.

#### **4.2 Organizing the Grassroots Lobbying Effort**

As with any campaign, Riley prepared a very specific plan to build momentum for his school legislation before directly asking for citizen support at the seven regional forums planned for the fall. Traditional campaign methods were organized, such as launching a speaker’s bureau, encouraging media coverage of the two Blue Ribbon Committees developing reform recommendations, and the production of “canned” speeches and press releases for use by supporters.

Beyond the more traditional methods, the plan also included political tactics usually reserved for an election campaign. These included a public opinion poll on education conducted in July, a November statewide television address by Riley to explain his

school improvement proposal, and professionally produced television commercials, urging people to contact their legislators in support of school reform and funding. However, laying the groundwork for citizen engagement from the grass tops to the grassroots was fundamental to the two-pronged campaign strategy.

#### **4.2.1 Grass tops/grassroots organization design.**

Chance (1986) labeled it the “T-formation.” Riley’s education advisor called it a “grass tops, grassroots” strategy (T. Peterson, personal communication, September 4, 2015). Both terms described a support-building mechanism, designed to maximize buy-in from stakeholders from the top down and the bottom up.

You’ve got to have a broad structure of people at the top and the bottom. But they have to be feeding information and strategies to each other back and forth. So the grass tops don’t think they’re out there by themselves on the one hand, but they also can stimulate action at the grassroots. And the grassroots feel like they have some connection to the statewide action. They can either reach their members or the effort (T. Peterson, personal communication, September 4, 2015).

As Mississippi’s experience demonstrated, bringing all stakeholders together for input was important before presenting a school reform plan to the public. These stakeholders were the “grass tops,” a wide array of public school supporters, who could use their contacts and lend their networks if afforded the opportunity to shape the proposal.

Known as the Blue Ribbon Committee on Financing Excellence in Education, its charge was to hammer out the school reform plan and the method to fund it. Chaired by Riley and businessman Bill Page, this statewide task force was a diverse group of legislators, teachers, administrators, school board and parent associations, local chambers

of commerce, attorneys, business and civic leaders. Each had a constituency and an established network of contacts, important to sustaining future public activism.

Although there were many educators on the task force, the diversity was notable. One teacher said that when attending the first meeting, she looked around the table and thought it would be “a miracle” if the group could settle on a place for lunch, much less develop a unified school reform plan. (E. Gressette, personal communication, March 3, 2015). However, the variety of viewpoints would serve as a sounding board for potential legislative objections raised against the proposal. As one education lobbyist said, “You had to invite everybody because you couldn’t afford to have anybody on the outside throwing rocks” (J. Grant, personal communication, July 23, 2015)

The initial framework for the committee’s work was the “New Approach to Quality Education,” a 41-point school improvement plan developed by the S.C. Department of Education. S.C. Superintendent Charlie Williams, a statewide elected official, had presented the 41-point plan to education, business, and civic organizations before Riley formed his blue ribbon committees. However, business people and some of educators wanted a more comprehensive proposal. Consequently, they asked Peterson to combine recommendations from the “New Approach” with reform strategies proposed by the ECS and the SREB.

Even with the combined “New Approach,” ECS, and SREB plans as the blueprint, reaching consensus on the recommendations would be a difficult, but critical, effort if the committee was to present a united voice in support of its final proposals. Also, without consensus, the valuable network each member brought to the committee could be lost.

One example of difficult task force debates concerned teacher pay raises, which ultimately became a central selling point for the reform plan.

At that time, South Carolina's teacher pay was ranked 49<sup>th</sup> in the country. The committee recommended increasing salaries to the Southeastern average; they reasoned that otherwise good teachers might move to surrounding states that had already raised salaries. However, business representatives insisted on accountability measures, such as exit exams, greater teacher accountability attached to merit pay, and a possible business oversight committee.

The S.C. Education Association (SCEA) balked. Not only did the teacher group argue for salaries at the national level, but also had concerns that too many accommodations might be made to business in order to maintain its support for the reform plan's funding (Norton, 1983, September 18).

Of the two teacher associations, the SCEA had the greatest membership. With 20,000 working and retired teachers, the politically active SCEA represented the state's largest education communication network, which would be valuable to igniting grassroots level support. At that time, the Palmetto State Teachers Association (PSTA) was a fledging organization with about a thousand members. While it supported school reform, PSTA members were not actively involved in politics. South Carolina was one of the only states in the country without a meaningful teacher's union or public employee collective bargaining rights.

It took Riley's intervention to reach an agreement with the SCEA. At a hastily-called meeting at the association's headquarters, Riley answered questions from members and assured the group that pay raises to the Southeastern average would be a plank in the

program. However, the SCEA would have to compromise on setting salaries at the national level and the proposed accountability measures if they wanted a salary increase.

They wanted some things I couldn't go along with, and we had the question of were they going all the way with me, but not on this -- the commitment we would get the teachers' pay up to the Southeastern average? Not over the Southeastern average, but up to it.

And the teachers – well, I won't get into all that detail – but they complained about not having this and not having that. And I said, you know, if you all want to support me, fine; and if you don't, fine. But I do have in the proposal raising teacher pay up to the Southeastern average (R. Riley, personal communication, March 10, 2014).

The teachers finally agreed, and these frank discussions helped make the SCEA one of Riley's most powerful allies (personal communication, March 10, 2014).

Consensus on controversies worked out by the task force produced three outcomes. First, it solidified acceptability of the recommendations among its members. Second, it deepened understanding of the reasons behind the proposal's platforms, which prepared members to explain to their grassroots counterparts the necessity of the plan and its funding. Third, the task force discussions served as dress rehearsals for the legislative battles ahead.

#### **4.2.2. A community approach to education policy.**

Community participation in education is the academic expertise of Larry Winecoff and Conrad Powell. Beginning with the Civil Rights movement, the two University of South Carolina professors worked with schools and communities throughout the

Southeast, addressing local problems arising from school desegregation. Underwritten by a Mott Foundation grant, they systematically guided public discussions about their local schools, then used the data to assist the community and schools to partner for the improvements both groups deemed necessary.

Throughout their years working with communities and schools, they developed a very specific method to organize and facilitate citizen discussion groups, gather information, and synthesize it into recommendations to help schools solve problems and form better community partnerships.

We did workshops, like community based workshops. One goal was to train community education coordinators. And the second one, to help the community own their schools and open up the schools for afternoon and evening activities, running all the way from vocational training to playing bridge. So, we had a lot of community forums around the state and throughout the southeast (L. Winecoff, personal communication, April 7, 2015).

To oversee the community forums, Winecoff and Powell trained doctoral students from USC's College of Education as meeting facilitators. Their school and community partnership work took them throughout South Carolina, building a network of school district contacts.

The school and community approach was very specific as to organizing and facilitating meetings to ensure an open discussion among all stakeholders. They developed a template reflecting a seven-step planning guide for school districts. These steps included identifying and assessing problems, setting goals, anticipating problems, and continued monitoring.

In 1980, Winecoff and Powell worked with S.C. First Lady Ann Yarborough Riley on a statewide citizen participation in education project. A project planning guide was developed to help school districts reach four goals: devising simple, useful plans to increase citizen participation in their schools; providing a uniform system of information collecting; identifying problems and setting realistic goals, and using the collected data to build and sustain the participation programs. These four goals mirrored what the Riley administration hoped to accomplish when launching its Fall 1983 citizen participation campaign.

The Winecoff and Powell participatory plan was incorporated into the seven regional forums designed to rally public support for Riley's school reform agenda. However, gubernatorial pep rallies would not encourage citizen buy-in, no matter how enthusiastic the event. Understanding that public ownership was critical to citizen activism, Riley's advisors asked the two USC professors to use their expertise to organize and facilitate small group sessions following each forum, just as they had done during their previous school and community projects.

However, their task was not limited just to gathering public input, but also to designing the plan for citizen discussions, using their network of school district contacts and trained facilitators. In addition, Winecoff and Powell were to submit summaries from the small group discussions to the Governor's Office 24 hours after the events. These summaries later were incorporated into the Riley education proposal (L. Winecoff and C. Powell, personal communication, April 7, 2015).

### 4.3 Engaging Citizen Support throughout the State

With the organizing blueprint complete, Riley launched a campaign to engage the public. The state committee, which was working on the specifics of the reforms, had not finished its proposal or designated a way to fund it. They waited until October to formally announce their recommendations, so that they could incorporate ideas that emerged in the public forums.

Primary to citizen engagement were the seven regional forums, conducted by Riley, together with the state education superintendent, supportive legislators, district superintendents, and teachers of the year. The active involvement of Lieutenant Governor Mike Daniel was particularly effective. Like Riley, Daniel was elected in November 1982, which increased his statewide name recognition and maintained his political contacts. According to the governor's staff, the lieutenant governor became a second spokesman for the EIA. This was a unique partnership for South Carolina. "So, that's a big help when you've got two of the highest office holders in the state really working on a major initiative" (B. Prince, personal communication, August 5, 2015).

However, going to the public for support was not risk free. Newspaper editorial boards pointed out that Riley faced a "terrific selling job between now and January" for more school funding, pointing to his sales tax defeat during the 1983 session. "The governor and educators are taking a risk by going directly to the people, but the greater risk is to sit on the sideline and do nothing" (*The Greenville Piedmont*, 1983, September 30).

#### 4.3.1 Rolling out the campaign.

The effort to build public activism had all the earmarks of a political campaign. Plans included a statewide public opinion poll, pep rally-like town hall meetings, earned and paid media, and an unprecedented statewide television speech by Riley to promote the school reform recommendations and the need for funding.

When he announced the forums, Riley said that taking his case to the public would be a way to create a political climate for change. “I think the ultimate goal is to reach legislators, and I think the way to reach legislators properly – since they are representatives of the people – is to go to the people and involve them in the process,” Riley announced (Weston, 1983, August 23, p. 1B). Laying success squarely on citizen activism, the governor told the media that it would be “very damaging politically” for lawmakers to oppose an education plan that the public perceived would bring results (Weston, 1983, August 23, p. 1B)

The plan for the regional forums was rolled out at the same time as a statewide opinion poll, commissioned by the governor’s office. The poll gauged public opinion on school reform and funding. The results showed that close to 80% of the respondents supported school improvement and raising teacher salaries. Seventy five percent stated that they would support a legislator who favored a tax increase to fund better schools. However, polling data showed opinion evenly split between raising the sales tax and using existing state revenue to fund improvements.

These polling results met immediate media and legislative skepticism. The reliability and methodology of the poll were questioned. Conflicting results over support for a tax increase “might make Riley overly optimistic” (*The Anderson Independent*, 1983,

September 18). Regarding the poll, another editorial board noted that the “wheels of the well-orchestrated campaign seem a bit greased” (*The State*, 1983, September 11).

Nonetheless, Riley stated that he hoped the poll numbers would convince legislators that a sales tax increase would not be a political liability (Sayles, 1983, September 8).

The poll not only was a well-publicized segue to the upcoming citizen forums, but also served to pinpoint language that initiated positive responses from the public. Later, this wording was used when producing public service television ads, which were aired to encourage average citizens to contact their legislators in support of education reform and funding.

#### **4.3.2 Seven regional forums.**

Riley’s strategy to involve the public centered around the seven regional forums, a combination pep rally and town hall meeting staged to generate community buy-in. Drumming up statewide citizen support meant getting away from the state capital and out into local school districts. Public forums were a success for Mississippi Governor Winter’s school reform campaign; however, the South Carolina regional meetings included additional strategies. One was “Excellence in Education Day,” specifically planned to get Riley and his team into every county that was encompassed by the regional forums.

Prior to each evening’s forum, Riley, his wife, the lieutenant governor, and state education superintendent fanned out across the region’s counties, visiting schools and meeting with students, teachers, and especially parents. Visits by the governor and other officials served not just to encourage attendance at the evening regional forum. It also

allowed Riley one-on-one meetings to hear teacher and parents' concerns and personally solicit their help for school reform.

The local school visits generated extensive local media coverage. Weekly newspapers ran detailed stories and multiple pictures of state officials eating lunch with students or having coffee with parents. To promote the county visits, the gubernatorial staff scheduled as many local radio interviews and editorial board meetings as time allowed. School districts accommodated by hosting community open houses at their schools. A practiced campaigner, Riley shook hands not only with faculty members, but also toured offices to meet school assistants and walked the lunch line to greet cafeteria workers.

According to media reports, some 13,000 people attended the seven forums, held in high school gymnasiums or college auditoriums. The regional rallies were "like stump meetings and road shows of past South Carolina history" (*The Greenville Piedmont*, 1983, September 30). Local high school bands played. In addition to Riley and other state leaders, speeches were made by local business leaders, teachers of the year, and at one forum, South Carolina's Mother of the Year. Some districts offered school buses to transport citizens, who wanted to attend an out-of-town rally (Hendren, 1983, October 13, p. 1).

Attendance at the seven forums indicated the strength of the contact networks tapped by the Riley team. Those encouraging attendance were not just educator networks, such as the SCEA, PSTA, or the state school administrators association. Significantly, parents involved in Mrs. Riley's Citizen Participation Task Force joined the effort. This task force included School Improvement Councils (SIC) and PTAs around the state. Good government groups, such as the League of Women Voters, encouraged attendance.

Business and civic club were notified. Even religious leaders were asked to provide assistance, such as printing forum announcements in their church bulletins. At many forums, Riley began the day talking to regional chambers of commerce, where the groundwork had been set by Charleston attorney William Youngblood. Early in the planning process, Youngblood was designated “the business voice” of Riley’s reforms, building links to local chambers around the state.

The regional forums received extensive newspaper and television coverage with reporters describing the rallies as “all-star education traveling shows,” a “public relations blitzkrieg,” and “an educational call to arms.” However, not all attendees were positive about the experience. Legislators complained that Riley was vague when explaining to the crowds how funding for school improvements would be raised. At the Charleston business meeting, a school board chairman insisted that new revenue was not needed for improvements and objected to the state Department of Education handling any new funding. “They are the same crowd who got us into trouble in the first place” (Norton, 1983, September 16, p. 6C).

A consistent theme in Riley’s remarks was the importance of raising the state’s low teacher pay. Better salaries were needed to attract good candidates to the teaching profession, to treat teachers as professionals, and to underscore the value of education to the community, he said. While a large majority of teachers were enthusiastic about the reforms, one district teacher group said the state could not demand better quality in the classroom unless their salaries were increased (Burton, 1983, September 23, p. 1A).

While news coverage prominently featured the rallies and the speeches, there also was considerable coverage of the second segment of the town hall meetings: the small group participation meetings.

#### **4.3.3 Building public ownership through small group discussions.**

Riley and the forum speakers drew public enthusiasm, but it was the invitation to stay for the small group sessions that built citizen ownership. Scheduled to begin immediately after the speeches, the group sessions were a way for people to have direct input into the school improvement recommendations still being formulated by the statewide task force. The promise of input was not a ploy. Development of the final school improvement plan was deliberately kept flexible to allow the incorporation of the public's ideas.

According to Riley, the purpose of the group discussions were to allow people to “really talk about the programs. What programs did you think we ought to have or not have, and how are we going to pay for it? You really go into the details. Let people themselves talk about what we needed to do” (R. Riley, personal communication, March 3, 2014).

Based on their previous community participation projects, Winecoff and Powell purposely tailored questions for the small group sessions to gather what forum participants specifically thought should be done to improve their local schools. While the meetings were recorded, it was not an opinion poll. The sessions synthesized citizen discussions of community school needs into specific recommendations turned over to Governor's Office and the task force writing the plan.

Facilitators worked from an open-ended four page booklet to focus the discussions. These worksheets were much like the ones Winecoff and Powell devised for previous

public input projects, such as the Task Force for Citizen Participation in Schools, chaired by Mrs. Riley. At the forum's small group sessions, participants received the booklets to jot down discussion notes and to keep when they left.

The first page listed Riley's reform goals, leaving space for attendees to agree or disagree. On the second page asked group members to write down specific suggestions to improve teacher preparation, curriculum, and funding for school reforms. In addition, an "other" section at the bottom of the page allowed participants to bring up problems not included in the three listed. The third worksheet page requested detailed strategies that Riley could use to better education.

The last page was the most important to public engagement. Attendees were asked to list any activities they would undertake at home to implement the group's ideas, including a timeline to accomplish them. The ownership constructed in the first three pages led to specific citizen action goals on the last. "Each of those groups would make some sort of commitment to the way they were going to help influence the passage of the EIA. Whether it was phone calls to legislators. Whether it was writing letters..." (C. Powell, personal communication, April 7, 2015).

I think it was the fact that somebody gave them the opportunity to come in and talk about what their ideas were, comment about that, and have some real input at all these different forums. I don't mean formally the forums, but I mean all the different ways people could do that (B. Prince, personal communication, August 5, 2015).

Just as the forums drew big crowds, so did the small group sessions. Logistics became a problem since coordinators could not predict how many people might attend, and at times they were overwhelmed by the response. The carefully constructed plan grouped 10

to 15 people from the same county in a classroom with a trained recorder. When as many as 900 to 1,500 people stayed for the discussion sessions, the arrangement had to be reworked on the spot. More classrooms were opened, copies made, materials gathered, and additional facilitators recruited from school counselors, who were directing people into the classrooms.

“Some of it was by the seat of our pants because you just couldn’t plan for how many, that many people. You never knew how many were going to show up. But we had really good facilitators, who could also, for the most part, change directions, change gears...”

(C. Powell, personal communication, April 7, 2015).

Compiling reports from the evening meetings was the next challenge for the university professors. Public suggestions were compiled and turned over to the Governor’s Office within 24 hours. Many of the group reports were released immediately to the media, which reported the community’s reform priorities.

The small group recommendations collected from the seven forums showed “a remarkable similarity of responses among the participants” (Boone, Powell & Winecoff, 1983, October 18). Among the major themes were higher promotion standards, more remedial classes, mandatory full-day kindergarten, reduction in student-teacher ratio, and better gifted and talented programs. Raising teacher salaries was recommended, accompanied by higher certification standards. The most suggested method of paying for the reforms was a one cent increase in the state sales tax, coupled with the repeal of the state’s “Blue Laws.”

Winecoff and Powell (1984) wrote that of the 67 public recommendations from the forum’s small group sessions, 61 were directly reflected in the final plan announced by

the statewide task force. “Similarly, the committee presented only seven recommendations that did not emerge in the forums” (p. 27). They also concluded that the participation sessions would allow the state “to make significant progress in reducing the gap between schools and their communities” (1984, p. 27). Even better for the Riley reform campaign, the public recommendations cemented the feeling of ownership and action among their supporters.

Charged by the statewide task force to rework the propose plan to include the forums’ small group recommendations, Peterson concluded, “They felt like they were actually giving input and ideas into education topics that were being discussed at the state level, which most people, when they go to a meeting or a focus group or a forum, they don’t think anyone is ever going to use their information (personal communication, September 4, 2015).

#### **4.4 Sustaining Grassroots Lobbying through the Legislative Session**

With a new citizen support network built from the forums’ small group sessions and by invigorating established education, business, and civic contacts, the Riley team returned to the campaign tactics laid out in the July 23 memo. Major among these was a statewide television address by Riley after the blue ribbon committee approved the final reform proposal. The next tactic was to instruct newly-active citizen supporters in ways to contact their legislators. Finally, they arranged phone banks and marshaled supporter networks to reach the General Assembly.

##### **4.4.1 Statewide television address.**

Two weeks after the last forum, Riley’s education task force announced “The New Approach to Quality Education,” a 50-point school reform plan with raising teacher

pay to the Southeastern average as the centerpiece. Also included were monetary incentive rewards for teachers and improved school districts, more remedial education programs, curriculum for gifted students, and required kindergarten attendance. Because the plan was estimated to cost \$210 million, the statewide committee endorsed raising the state's 4 cents sales tax by a penny with all revenue to solely fund the "New Approach" proposals.

The sales tax increase and raising teacher pay came under immediate criticism. Republicans labeled the plan's funding as a 25% tax hike. Influential legislators said the sales tax was "dead on arrival" and expressed reluctance to support an across-the-board teacher salary increase (Walser, 1983, November 27, p. 1D). One senior legislator said that "good teachers would never be paid enough in South Carolina, while poor teachers will always be paid too much" (Surratt, 1983, October 18). "That's why Riley's proposal will require the legislative equivalent of D-Day planning and execution if it is to pass through the hostile election year waters" (Walser, 1983, November 27, p. 1D)

Division also appeared within the education community. SCEA president Vivian Watson said without the Southeastern average pay increase, she would have a hard time selling the additional responsibilities the plan would place on teachers (Surratt, 1983, October 20, p. 1A). A district superintendent questioned pouring money into remedial programs with less funding earmarked as incentives for good schools (Surratt, 1983, October 21, p. 1A.)

Such criticisms were common during controversial legislation proposals. However, to shore up support and maintain public momentum, Riley announced he would make a statewide televised address to explain the need for the "New Approach"

and tax increase. However, the underlying purpose of his speech was persuading people to actively contact their legislators to support the plan.

While gubernatorial State of the State addresses had been broadcasted in the past, usually on S.C. Educational Television (now ETV), it was unprecedented for a governor to address the state on a single issue via television. More remarkable, South Carolina commercial television stations also agreed to a live broadcast of Riley's speech to the General Assembly.

In an "unusual and direct appeal to South Carolinians," Riley asked citizens to contact their legislators in support of the sales tax increase for education. "A penny is a small price to pay for the thoughts of a generation," Riley said. "A penny is a small price to unleash the unlimited potential of our state" (Sayles, 1983, November 23, p. 1A).

Citizen engagement was the repeated theme of the 22- minute speech. "You can make the difference. I ask you to tell them," Riley stated (Weston, 1983, November 23, p. 1A). "I urge you to speak up because I can assure you those who insist we've come as far as we can will be speaking up," Riley said (Walser, 1983, November 23, p. 1A).

Following the speech, editorials focused on Riley's "emotional" appeal to citizen activism. *The Charlotte Observer* editorial board wrote, "We hope citizens who watched Gov. Riley's speech will work hard to persuade their legislators that adding a penny to the sales tax is a very sound and needed investment in South Carolina's future" (1983, November 27). A similar editorial in *The Greenville News* stated, "The governor's appeal was not for legislative action, but for public support that will encourage and prod lawmakers to join in this bold initiative for the schools" (1983, November 27). One columnist suggested, "The governor's success in getting a commitment for quality

education depends directly on the pressure applied to legislators, one on one, by constituents” (Bowie, 1983, November 26).

However, other editorial boards were not convinced, writing that the Riley plan “has holes big enough to drive a truck through” (*The Charleston Post and Courier*, 1983, November 29). Referring to Riley’s appeal for public support, one columnist predicted, “Those who argue against additional funding for education will be made to look and feel like Scrooge. They will be railed at from the pulpit. Teachers will urge little boys and girls to write nasty letters” (Shreadley, 1983, November 27).

A few legislators, who watched the speech from home rather than at the Statehouse, admitted that they immediately received constituent telephone calls in support (Dozier, 1983, November 23, p. 1A). However, most said they remained unconvinced that the tax increase was needed or would pass.

#### **4.4.2 Paid television advertising.**

From the beginning, earned and paid media were part of the strategy. Due to the forums and television speech, the Riley plan received intense “earned media” coverage from newspapers and television stations. The July 23 memo proposed an additional step: production of paid public service advertisements. The purpose of the ads was to urge the public to support Riley’s reform proposal and to educate citizens about how to contact legislators.

August polling revealed that a majority of the public supported school reform. However, it also showed that citizens did not know how to lobby lawmakers. Chernoff and Silver, a professional public relations team, told Riley:

People are all for you, but how do you turn them into advocates for action? You don't have to convince them to be advocates. They're already advocates, but they don't know what to do. And that was the most interesting observation because that's what prompted the combination of the speech and the ads. You have to explain and say what we need. So write a letter, make a phone call" (T. Peterson, personal communication, September 4, 2015).

With the slogan "A penny for their thoughts," the Columbia public relations firm produced three public service announcements. The scripts specifically demonstrated how citizens could lobby. One showed a worker in a hard hat sitting down to lunch, saying:

I never have been much on group activities. But tonight, instead of going bowling, I'm gonna' do something really important. Something for my kids. A bunch of us are calling legislators in favor of this penny increase in the sales tax for education.... I just want to help give them a decent education. They deserve it. And a penny? Shoot. Smartest money I ever spent. (Turning to co-workers) Are you with me? (Script in possession of Terry Peterson.)

Another ad featured a pregnant young woman walking to the mailbox, holding a letter and saying:

I'm not much of a letter writer. But I'm sending this to my state representative. I want him to know that I think it's time we did something to improve education in South Carolina. And to let him know I'm in favor of this penny increase in the sales tax. I figure if enough of us speak out, we'll get tougher standards, special programs for special kids, and top-notch teachers. I've never done this kind of

thing before. But this time, it's worth the effort. (Script in possession of Terry Peterson.)

The three ads ended with a voiceover of the campaign's slogan, "A penny for their thoughts."

Immediately, the state Republican Party chairman asked the state education television network for time to rebut the tax increase; the Libertarian Party asked the same. Both appearances were granted. The S.C. Merchants Association executive director said it was "a mistake for Riley to go over the heads of the Legislature and go to the public" (Johnson, 1983, December 5, p. 5A). Other tax opponents criticized the tax as regressive for the poor and elderly.

A private foundation already existed to raise money for the Riley school reform campaign. Organized by Riley political supporters, the Foundation for Excellence and Economic Development paid \$13,000 for the August public opinion polling. With the need to produce the public service ads and buy television air time, the foundation raised an additional \$83,000 (Weston, 1983, November 21, p. 1A). However, questions arose about other funding used to promote the EIA with the public.

In addition to the foundation money, a \$148,000 grant from the Appalachian Regional Council (ARC) was used to promote the EIA and tax increase. The grant money went toward the television ads, printed mailers, mailing costs, and other promotional items (King, 1984, January 9, p. 3C). When opponents protested, Riley countered that use of the ARC money was legitimate because the commission approved the grant to advance South Carolina public education. As the dispute continued, columnists wrote the controversy diverted attention away from the reform debate (*The State*, 1984, January

16). Throughout these disagreements, most legislators said that the public engagement campaign had not changed their minds about the tax increase.

#### **4.4.3 Activating citizen support networks**

While the Riley television speech and public service commercials dominated the air waves, the ground game now became activating the public support networks. Most significant was tapping the resources of the SCEA.

With 20,000 members, the SCEA had numbers, an established statewide organization, and political know-how. It also had a strong communication network from its state association office to the school level. While no electronic technology was available at that time, the association could quickly alert teachers through its regional “Uniserve” districts, county committees, and school contacts without relying on mailed, mimeographed newsletters. This contact “tree” was effective in getting the word out quickly with the fewest number of telephone calls.

Although SCEA was stronger in some areas of the state than others, the organization was known to legislators. This familiarity was due to the political training SCEA provided its members, its election endorsements, and campaign donations from its political action committee. It also employed lobbyists to track bills and marshal legislative support at the Statehouse.

At one time, both administrators and teachers belonged to the SCEA. Prior to the EIA effort, superintendents and principals formed their own organization, the S.C. Association of School Administrators (SCASA). Although there were times the teacher and administrator organizations differed on public school issues, the EIA united them.

As Riley’s school reform built momentum during the legislative session, former SCEA lobbyist Joe Grant said administrators “recognized that they didn’t have the political muscle alone to make it happen” (personal communication, July 23, 2015).

So they (administrators) were effective in allowing our members to take time off to come down and lobby. By doing that, they gave, certainly implied, approval and support for the cause. Now, I don’t remember any specific, independent action from the administrator organization at that time. But we were happy to simply have them give our members the flexibility – the teachers the flexibility – to come down to the lobby, to do stuff back in the districts that supported the whole public Education Improvement Act effort. The administrators would cover their substitute pay, those kinds of things. We would tell them we need large numbers, and they would help us get large numbers (J. Grant, personal communication, July 23, 2015).

Choosing teachers to travel to the Statehouse was not haphazard. When specific lawmakers were targeted, teachers from their legislative districts were brought to Columbia to lobby. SCEA President Vivian Watson remembered:

We would have legislative lobbying days, and actually, the school districts and our superintendents again supported us in that. And they would bring buses in -- a bus load in from Greenville and different places. So, they (teachers) would be there to lobby, and then some of the school districts would provide a bus. It depended on how many were coming. But the associations would work with the school districts, and they would get a bus and come in. And maybe there would be

20 or 30 of them from some of the school districts (personal communication, April 23, 2015).

Watson said that some administrators acted as substitute teachers to allow faculty members to lobby at the Statehouse (personal communication, April 23, 2015).

According to former PSTA executive director Elizabeth Gressette, her association did not encourage political action. There was no concerted effort to get their teachers to the forums, nor did the PSTA support teachers leaving the classroom to personally lobby at the Statehouse. Although Gressette kept members notified of EIA developments through her newsletter, she received “little interaction” from the PSTA teachers. “I didn’t get a whole lot of stuff back” (personal communication, March 3, 2015).

However, Gressette said the PSTA board endorsed the EIA, and she was at the Statehouse daily during the legislative debates (personal communication, March 3, 2015). As the niece of a powerful senior state senator, she frequently was seen going in and out of her uncle’s office. “That was a very positive thing because she (Gressette) had sort of an inside track into what was going on, too” (V. Watson, personal communication, April 23, 2015).

The Statehouse was not the only lobbying location, and teacher associations were not the sole participants. Parent organizations, such as the PTAs and SICs, also encouraged their members to contact legislators, as did the community members of Mrs. Riley’s Citizen Participation in Schools task force. The League of Women Voters urged their members to speak up.

By mid-December, the Governor’s Office set up an “Education Hotline,” staffed by volunteers with the \$500 cost paid by the EIA’s privately-funded foundation. One

duty of the “hotline” volunteers was to answer questions regarding the Riley proposal. More important, the volunteers used lists, compiled from the seven citizen forums, to call forum participants and ask them to support the EIA with their legislators.

Forum participants received the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of their district legislators, and how to contact the Education Hotline. Also distributed were three different form letters with a message from Riley encouraging them “to write in their own words, but with suggestions of what to write” (Surratt, 1983, December 13).

The form letters set off protests. *The Charleston Post and Courier* editorial board insisted “Write in your own words!” and pointed out EIA letters to the editor sounded as if they were written by the same person (1983, December 16). The Charleston County school board chairman questioned the ethics of a letter writing campaign. Developed by school principals, they asked faculty members to write a letter to their state senator and House member, endorsing the EIA and sales tax increase. The district superintendent told the school board that no school supplies or postage were used, but a Charleston legislator claimed that some teachers said they felt “coerced” into writing (Bennett, 1984, January 25, pp. 1A, 2A).

Underlying all these groups was Riley’s own extensive political network, built from supporters active in his past election campaigns. These groups ranged from wealthy donors, who gave to the EIA foundation, to rural black church communities. Although some educators were among the 65 regional forum coordinators, most were Democratic Party activists, lawyers, county and town council members, small business owners, and some legislators or spouses of legislators.

Riley tapped any support group he thought helpful, including a letter to fellow United Methodists. Citing Methodism's history of education support, Riley asked church members to lobby for the EIA and tax increase at an upcoming legislative budget hearing (Riley, R.W., 1979-1987, Riley to Methodist Friends, February 29, 1984). A letter from the S.C. Baptist Education and Missionary Convention asked pastors to bring "every breathing soul" to lobby in Columbia during the EIA budget hearings. "Numbers are important. Many of our lawmakers are content that we cannot muster enough people to make a showing of strength. Please arrange a carpool, bring vans loaded, and even buses where possible" (Rich, J.O., Rich to Ministers and Friends of Public Education, January 26, 1984).

Despite these activities, prominent legislators said they had received little or no contact from the public. The chairman of the House budget committee said Riley had made "a good plea," but he had received no telephone calls from his constituents (Sayles, 1983, November 24). A fellow budget committee member said of the few calls he had gotten, a majority of his constituents were against the EIA tax increase (Dozier, 1983, December 2, p. 2A).

Even editorial boards doubted active public support would make a difference in school reform funding. Quoting legislators who said the EIA and sales tax increase "are dead and buried," editors of *The Sumter Daily Item* wrote:

The governor, however, is counting on his constituency, which includes all the voters in the state, to get behind his proposal and put pressure on their legislators to respond positively. So far, except for the expected endorsement from special interest groups, there has been no discernible strong grassroots support for the

package. That may change as the debate in the legislature gets underway (1984, January 13).

The lack of—or, perhaps, denial of—grassroots support was an important obstacle, but it was not the only one

#### **4.5 Obstacles to Building and Sustaining Citizen Activism**

Because the sales tax increase was defeated in the previous legislative session, Riley knew that the penny tax funding for the EIA would be a major hurdle, particularly in a legislative election year. This challenge was apparent following the Nov. 22 television address, when the governor explained the 50-point “New Approach to Quality Education” and the need for the one cent tax.

Opponents immediately started speaking up. Legislative objections focused more on the tax increase than on the reform plan itself. Colleges and universities asked why their institutions were not included in possible new education funding. State employees thought they needed a pay increase as much as the teachers. Also, higher taxes were hardly a popular issue with the general public.

Beyond anticipated difficulties selling the tax increase, other obstacles arose among some EIA support groups, requiring quick resolution to maintain momentum and their contact networks.

##### **4.5.1 Educators’ reluctance and disagreements.**

Like all professions, educators have a range of opinions and are not monolithic. Disagreements are common among teachers, administrators, school boards, state education department officials, and teacher associations. Such was the case in South Carolina. After Riley’s EIA televised address, there were no immediate endorsements of

the reform plan, even though education groups worked on the task force devising the proposal, and hundreds of educators participated in the regional forums that provided input into the plan.

In early January, five state education groups came together “in an unprecedented effort” to jointly express their support for the EIA (Wire reports, 1984, January 3). The groups were the SCEA, PSTA, SCASA, the school boards association, and the state PTA, organizations “known to squabble with each other in the past” (Wire reports, 1984, January 3).

Although the plan included a teacher pay increase to the Southeastern average, there was no immediate endorsement of the reform from the two teacher associations. Some teachers were reluctant to pay more taxes even to receive a salary boost. “A lot of people had reservations about the tax, including our own members,” said SCEA lobbyist Joe Grant (personal communication, July 23, 2015).

Grant said some teacher salary improvements were included in the 1977 Education Finance Act, a complicated law aimed at equalizing school funding to poor districts and providing a basic level of revenue for all schools. However, Grant observed:

The assumption is that because you work in the field, you will automatically support those things that are designed to improve the field is a falsehood. Because we found at the time of selling (it) to the membership, it all boils down to how does it affect me and my pocketbook personally, no matter what the overall goals are” (personal communication, July 23, 2015).

Political involvement was part of the SCEA mission. Despite this, Grant said some of the association’s teachers were not comfortable with the SCEA’s candidate

endorsements, political contributions, and active Statehouse lobbying. The “friction” experienced on political and governance issues usually rose from local members. While the association retained good enrollment numbers, the SCEA leadership could not assume all its teachers automatically would embrace an education cause, including the EIA sales tax increase. “Everybody wasn’t cut from the same cloth. We had to sort of manage that” (J. Grant, personal communication, July 23, 2015).

Grant attributed some of the internal differences to an increase in conservatism among SCEA members, stemming from the growth of the Republican Party in South Carolina. Grant noted that “...a lot of members were transitioning from yellow dog Democrats to being new Republicans. Accommodating for that political difference was as big a part of our struggle to get broad-based support for the penny as anything else” (personal communication, July 23, 2015).

Also, more conservative teachers, who objected to political activism, had an alternative with the recent establishment of the PSTA. The PSTA’s mission did not encourage political involvement, and Statehouse lobbying was limited to Gressette with no teacher members accompanying her. Even after passage of the EIA, educator opposition to the tax increase continued. At the start of the 1984 school year, one high school principal grumbled about the difficulties educators faced in implementing the new requirements. The administrator said he did not favor the tax increase or some of the EIA’s reforms. “Teachers are good at two things,” he said. “They jump on the bandwagon, and they carry things to the extremes. That’s what’s going to get us into trouble” (Compton, 1984, August 20, p. 5A).

In addition to the sales tax, disputes arose about the reform plan itself, particularly business' insistence on merit pay for teachers. According to Peterson, neither teachers nor administrators supported the merit pay platform. Merit pay "would be a deal breaker. The whole package would have gone down" (personal communication, September 4, 2015). From the beginning, educators working on the task force also argued that the emerging plan did not cover all the schools' needs. The teachers were "close to walking, even though they'd been involved (in the task force)." It took Riley's personal intervention, as well as changing the terminology from "merit pay" to "incentive pay," to reach a compromise (T. Peterson, personal communication, September 4, 2015).

Another sticking point was the plan's "pass to play" provision, requiring student athletes to maintain a C average to play sports. Vivian Watson recalled that some task force members, who were coaches or former coaches, disagreed with the proposal. They argued that team sports were the reasons many students came to school. This also was the position of various legislators, who objected to the "pass to play" component because they felt that many of their constituents "might not vote for them if their kids would not be able to play sports" (V. Watson, personal communication, April 23, 2015).

Initially, African American organizations resisted "pass to play;" however, their objections were alleviated by the addition of remedial academic programs for students. After enactment of the EIA, Riley continued to hear more grumbling about the "pass to play" provision than any other (T. Peterson, personal communication, September 4, 2015).

When objections to funding for the Arts or programs for gifted students surfaced, Watson used the "pass to play" argument to her advantage:

I told them, you know, you've got to remember something. For every student who comes to school because he can play football or basketball, there are other students, who only come because they can be in the drama club, the chorus, the band, or the art classes. That's their whole motivation for coming to school. And I said, that is just as important, and they deserve it just as much as the student who plays football (V. Watson, personal communication, April 23, 2015).

Different positions on political activism resulted in tension between the two teacher associations. With PSTA as a new teacher organization, Gressette said she was thrilled to be a part of Riley's reform task force and was sure that the SCEA "was chapped" when she was invited to participate (personal communication, March 3, 2015). With only about 1,000 PSTA members, Gressette said that the SCEA was the face of South Carolina's teachers with the General Assembly. "It was remarkable to me that we were given the same vote and the same opportunity to voice an opinion as the SCEA. That was a big deal for us" (E. Gressette, personal communication, March 3, 2015).

Unlike the SCEA, the Palmetto State Teachers Association did not have a large statewide network nor did it encourage its teachers to actively lobby. In keeping with their conservative position, the PSTA emphasized teacher dedication and love for children as the reason for better salaries. Meanwhile, the more aggressive SCEA cited South Carolina's low national ranking in teacher pay as one reason to keep up with neighboring states that already had increased teacher wages.

Although there were "never any major battles" between the two associations, Watson remembered that they "clashed" during some of the task force sessions, especially when Gressette argued that teachers entered the profession because they loved

children, not for the money. “I looked at her that day and told her, ‘I love teaching. It’s been my life. It’s all I ever want to do, but there’s not a damn thing wrong for getting paid for what you love to do.’ And I said, teachers deserve to get paid as professionals” (V. Watson, personal communication, April 23, 2015).

The governor needed the support of both groups no matter the differences in their political philosophies. SCEA had large numbers and a well-established political network, resulting in vocal, visible advocates at the Statehouse. However, it was not the small membership that lessened the PSTA’s overall effectiveness. It was the reluctance to become actively involved.

“I could never understand how any teacher would not embrace this passionately as anybody could. That’s what always struck me,” Prince said, wondering if PSTA had a division within the ranks. “If so, that’s a very lame excuse for something that’s obviously going to benefit your members and the people who walk in your classroom, the kids who walk into the classroom” (B. Prince, personal communication, August 5, 2015). Even without the PSTA’s activism, Peterson observed, “But we needed them because they were more Republican” (personal communication, September 4, 2015).

#### **4.5.2 “Tyranny of limited expectations.”**

State Superintendent of Education Charlie Williams caused a stir among legislators when he bluntly stated that South Carolina had “deliberately undereducated its people” to provide cheap labor for industries and farms. “A great deal of the problem we’re confronting is historical. We’re dealing with children and grandchildren of people who don’t understand the importance of education,” he said at a meeting of state agency directors. Conceding the point, one legislator warned Williams that he would “offend the

power structure of the state to say they wickedly and purposely kept people in servitude for exploitation” (Associated Press, 1983, November 11).

Although more diplomatically phrased, Williams earlier took the same message to a regional forum audience, asserting the days were over when smokestack industries created jobs that required more brawn than brains. School improvement was needed, he said, because “the state is moving away from high muscle jobs to high brain power jobs” (Staff reports, 1983, September 23). South Carolina’s low national rankings across economic and education indicators confirmed Williams’ assertions. In 1983, the state was ranked 49<sup>th</sup> nationally in per capita income, teachers’ pay, and funding per student. It was 50<sup>th</sup> in SAT scores and 47<sup>th</sup> in the number of high school graduates.

The undervaluing of education was not a new concept to Charleston attorney Bill Youngblood. Chosen by Riley to solicit business support for the EIA, Youngblood spoke of the link between good schools and good jobs to chambers of commerce and civic groups throughout the state. Youngblood said that he often confronted the attitude, “We’re a small, poor state, and we spend a lot of money on education, and we’re doing the best we can.” Youngblood labeled that mindset as “a tyranny of limited expectations” (personal communication, January 7, 2014).

Like many states in the Deep South, South Carolina had embraced the Sunbelt economic strategy of cheap land, cheap labor, and low taxes. To sell the necessity of education reform, Youngblood told business groups that companies seeking cheap land and cheap labor could find more lucrative places to locate overseas. Low paying, low skill jobs would follow. A good example was the textile industry that employed thousands of South Carolinians. Already, textile production was being outsourced to the

Far East, which eventually led to the industry's collapse in the state. However, as a dominant job creator, "The textile industry was still very strong, and they hadn't quite realized they were about to die" (Youngblood, personal communication, January 7, 2014).

Youngblood's constant message to business was "the only sustainable advantage we would have, would be the quality of our workforce" (personal communication, January 7, 2014). However, the business community remained skeptical about the need for education improvement.

I remember being in a big forum in Myrtle Beach, and the guy, who was the head of the South Carolina Automobile Dealers Association, brought the crowd down because I had just made a point about the need for school facilities. So this guy said, 'Well, hell, if kids can learn how to make love in the back of a Volkswagen, they can learn to read in a barn.' The crowd thought that was wonderful, and I thought I'm not going to carry this crowd with that mindset (B. Youngblood, personal communication, January 7, 2014).

As opposition grew to funding school improvements, a newspaper columnist noted that South Carolina frequently used poverty as an excuse. He wrote that the state "could move ahead with vigor paying the price for education excellence, or we can choke on the dust of our history, buying the myth that South Carolina is too poor to strive for greatness" (Bowie, 1984, January 28).

#### **4.5.3 Opposition to the sales tax increase**

The EIA's recommendations were not the focus of Statehouse opposition. It was the penny sales tax increase. Influential House members, who controlled the state budget,

quickly announced their objections to the EIA's tax increase and predicted it would sink the reform bill. Some grumbled that it was easy for Riley to push the additional one cent increase because he was not facing reelection in November as they were.

In addition to the upcoming elections, legislators faced fierce pressure from a coalition of powerful businesses that objected to the sales tax. These were the state's automobile dealers, the S.C. Merchants Association, and the state Textile Manufacturers. With some of its most powerful members against the EIA, the S.C. Chamber of Commerce was reluctant to endorse the school funding plan.

In an "Open Letter to the People of South Carolina," the S.C. Chamber asserted South Carolina was one of the poorest and most heavily taxed states in the country. The chamber contended that as a percent of taxable personal income, South Carolina's state and local taxes ranked the 12<sup>th</sup> highest in the nation and the 13th highest as a percentage of family income. Also, South Carolina was the third highest in state and local taxes among the Southern states (Sayles, 1983, December 8, p. 1A). However, by the beginning of the 1984 session, the state chamber endorsed the EIA funding, conceding that good schools were linked to future good paying jobs.

Although most of the resistance was directed at the tax increase and not the school improvement recommendations, the state Merchants Association was early and vocal in its opposition to both. The association's executive director traveled the state telling business clubs that students needed basic math skills more than computer skills, predicting the reform plan would produce "mediocrity at best" (Johnson, 1983, December 5, p. 1A).

The Textile Manufacturers were even more aggressive. The textile association hired a well-known lobbyist to oppose the tax, funded a statewide poll to gauge the public's support for a sales tax increase, and paid for the development of an alternative school reform plan to present to the General Assembly. Not all textile company owners opposed the EIA's funding; however, international textile magnate Roger Milliken headed the opposition group. "Even teachers couldn't combat Milliken" (B. Prince, personal communication, August 5, 2015).

The funding debate also affected support among Riley's usual Democrat allies in the General Assembly. The Speaker of the House, a Democrat, advanced a \$90 million school improvement plan that eliminated the sales tax by cutting back the number of reforms. He argued that his alternative reform package was preferable because the sales tax was the most regressive of all taxes, and Riley's \$210 million legislation would burden the poor and elderly.

While advocating the need for school reform, many newspaper editorial boards did not support the EIA sales tax hike. Some questioned whether school districts could effectively use the "gush of incoming money since they can't seem to handle the money they receive now" (*The State*, 1984, May 17). Other editors complained that the sales tax was a regressive means of funding or questioned the wisdom of raising the salaries of incompetent teachers.

As opposition groups argued against the plan, several editors took issue with the governor's position that he would not compromise on full funding for the EIA. "He may mean that now, but Mr. Riley better prepare a fallback position – if he doesn't have one already" (*The State*, 1984, December 9).

In the end, Riley got the \$210 million school improvement plan funded by the one cent sales tax increase. However, during the legislative bargaining process, he agreed to cap the inventory tax and to a \$300 sales tax limit on all cars and boats.

#### **4.6 The Most Effective Lobbying Strategies**

The National Commission on Excellence in Education's 1983 report *A Nation At Risk* directed public attention to the condition of the nation's schools and the long term economic consequences of their decline. The 1983 ECS study reached similar conclusions. However, it was the nation's southern governors who recognized improvement of their lagging public schools would positively influence their states' lagging economies.

Each governor took his own path to education improvement, using different approaches to reform and funding. While all received recognition for their efforts, it was the 1984 EIA that the RAND Corporation deemed "the most comprehensive single piece of legislation this year" and a model for school reform (UPI, 1984, August 5, p. 1C).

From the beginning, the key to the EIA's passage was mobilizing the public to put enough pressure on the General Assembly to enact a public school reform bill and its one cent sales tax increase. A number of strategies contributed to the successful completion of this goal.

##### **4.6.1 Small group discussions and regional forums.**

The fundamental lesson learned from Mississippi's school reform effort was that public buy-in on the front end was critical if there is to be pay-off on the back end.

Peterson noted that the EIA was built on "grassroots ownership." From the business community to the people who attended the forums and small group discussion sessions,

“They all felt like they were part of this effort all the way along, including the necessary funding” (T. Peterson, personal communication, September 4, 2015).

Riley observed, “We were trying to get the people involved – the general public involved – and that was a real key to the whole thing. You couldn’t get the legislature to pass a major education reform, unless you had very strong grassroots support” (personal communication, August 18, 2015). The seven regional forums constituted the main channel to public engagement, particularly the small group sessions that followed. “I think there’s always that point of trying to make people feel they have an opportunity to give some input, and that’s so important. People always feel good if they have the opportunity to hear for themselves and ask questions” (V. Watson, personal communication, April 23, 2015).

To accomplish the “grass tops/grassroots” organization strategy, the regional forums were designed to grab media and public attention. “I think it would have been very, very difficult to get any grassroots people calling their legislators unless there had been the forums,” Peterson said. The forum speeches got people “fired up. Word would spread. Something is happening. This is a big deal” (personal communication, September 4, 2015).

While the forum speeches and visits to community schools on Excellence in Education Days stirred community excitement, the most important catalyst to citizen engagement was the small group sessions that followed the forums. It was there people discussed what they thought their local schools needed, and how to accomplish these ideas. Each participant received a handout to write down their thoughts, and a facilitator was present at each group meeting to summarize the discussion.

Winecoff pointed out that the last page of the handouts was a summary of the activities each group devised to help pass the EIA. “Involvement was not just getting input but also getting a plan mobilized” (Winecoff, personal communication, April 2, 2015). To sustain the effort, it was essential that “local people take ownership of it and to get them to buy in to the responsibility for making it happen in their areas” (C. Powell, personal communication, April 2, 2015).

According to Prince, suggestions from the small groups resulted in more changes to the task force reform plan than any proposals advanced during the legislative process (personal communication, August 5, 2015). Prince said:

The public was so strong behind the package because they had helped put the package together. We had stuck to that. I just think that was a key part of it. These forums and other activities were not just a sales job. They were a legitimate effort to try and get input from the public. I think that’s what ultimately helped us on the political side” (personal communication, August 5, 2015).

Winecoff and Powell (1984) reported that 61 of the 67 public recommendations from the small group discussions were incorporated into the final task force plan.

#### **4.6.2 Including all stakeholders.**

While the grassroots were grown from the forums and small group sessions, the “grass tops” were stakeholders who had the influence and networks to encourage ground level support for the EIA. Many of the “grass tops” were leaders of education and parent groups, who could use their members to spread the word and activate their local communities. Others were lawyers and business leaders, whose contacts included chambers of commerce and civic clubs. Local elected officials with political networks

were among the “grass tops,” as well as good government groups, such as the League of Women Voters. Also included were supportive legislators with their own constituencies. The “grass tops” were formally known as the Committee on Financing Excellence in Education, charged with the task of designing the school improvement plan and the way to fund it.

With such a diverse group, it is not surprising that they often did not see eye to eye on education issues. However, building ownership in the school reform effort was as important for the “grass tops” leaders as it was for the citizen grassroots. “When I talk to people about school reform, I say, not only do you want teacher and principal involvement to pass it. That may not be enough. You need other people – business and others. But if you want it to actually work and be implemented with positive enthusiasm, you’ve got to have them involved on the front end. Otherwise, there won’t be any ownership” (T. Peterson, personal communication, September 4, 2015).

Early involvement also built trust in Riley’s leadership and his desire for school improvement. Task force member Bill Youngblood recalled, “This was something put together by colleagues we trust in the business community, colleagues the teachers trust from education, the superintendents, the parent associations” (personal communication, January 7, 2014).

As part of the EIA strategy, the task force was formed first, not just to begin putting together the proposal, but also to assist in generating interest in the upcoming citizen forums. Through their communication networks, task force members would keep their associates informed of the school reform discussions, while also encouraging them to generate local turnout for the forums.

According to Peterson, the best combination for legislative passage was having support from both business and teacher groups simultaneously. “You’ve got to have the business leaders and the educators at the same time, especially the teachers. They could generate numbers, and that was key” (T. Peterson, personal communication, September 4, 2015).

When reviewing reform efforts in other states, Peterson concluded that including teachers and principals from the outset was unique to the EIA initiative (personal communication, September 4, 2015). It paid off by building confidence among educators. “I remember feeling that he (Riley) didn’t want to do anything that was some big secret thing and dump it on people,” Watson said (personal communication, April 23, 2015). This assurance encouraged teachers to organize a valuable and extensive statewide communication network, which succeeded in increasing citizen activism in their communities.

#### **4.6.3 Sole focus of the governor.**

In July 1983, Riley agreed he would give singular attention to passing a school reform initiative during the 1984 legislative session. This commitment required that he use his powers of persuasion to gather a diverse group of potential supporters and to reconcile differences of opinion among group members. “It could not have been done without a governor, the bully pulpit of the governor,” said Youngblood. “Dick Riley was like Billy Graham. It was a lay ministry. So he pulled out all the stops to get the votes of the living and the dead” (personal communication, January 7, 2014).

It was Riley’s sole focus on education that excited teachers and maintained the momentum needed to get the legislation and funding passed during the twelve month

initiative. In addition to committing his attention only to school reform, Riley had the “unique” personal skills needed to build trust among a large, diverse group of supporters, Youngblood said. “And one would have to have all five of them to pull something like this off: vision, ability to enlist others, timing, persuasion skills, and the fifth skill, (the) practicality to translate vision into reality” (Youngblood, January 7, 2014).

The momentum was “constantly stoked” by Riley, who was “single-minded in his purpose, and it kept the rest of us single-minded in the purpose” (B. Prince, personal communication, August 5, 2015). Riley learned from the experiences of William Winter that focus, momentum, and quick passage were keys to the successful enactment of school reform.

With public activism as the linchpin of the lobbying effort, Peterson said Riley could not afford the standard approach of a long, drawn-out education improvement study. The regional forums, polling, Excellence in Education Days, and task force deliberations were all accomplished in a three to four month timeframe. The quick building of grassroots support was “part of its success because you didn’t lose a lot of enthusiasm” (T. Peterson, personal communication, September 4, 2015). Therefore, Riley was fully involved in orchestrating the strategies from beginning to end.

Riley built trust among competing groups because “he wasn’t the glamor man. That’s the whole thing” (V. Watson, personal communication, April 23, 2015). Prince recalled, “People realized this wasn’t just spin. He was the most stubborn about we weren’t going to change this package” (personal communication, August 5, 2015).

Describing opponents of the EIA as “flattened by the governor’s steamroller,” *The State’s* editorial board wrote, “Nevertheless, those of us who continue to have doubts

about this legislation must give Dick Riley his due” (1984, March 20). After final legislative passage of the EIA and sales tax increase, *The State* noted:

Now that the decision has been made, we salute the governor’s zeal, finesse and tenaciousness in winning a legislative nod to a tax that many citizens, perhaps a majority, opposed and one which many veteran legislators early on gave only a slim chance of approval this election year (1984, June 28).

It was Riley’s commitment, along with public input, and the inclusion of educators that transformed support into political action.

#### **4.7 Citizens’ Impact**

While assistance from some influential business leaders was important to the EIA’s approval, it was the numbers generated by the grassroots movement that created the biggest impact on legislative approval in an election year. “We were trying to get the people involved – the general public involved – and that was a real key to the whole thing. You couldn’t get the legislature to pass a major education reform, unless you had very strong grassroots support” (R. Riley, personal communication, August 18, 2015). As citizen involvement began to grow, Prince observed:

Legislators made a political calculation when they saw that more people were for it than against it, both statewide and in their districts. Their thinking was this is not going to hurt me politically to support it, but it will hurt me politically not to. While critical and absolutely important to it, the key to passing that (EIA) was the public support we had. Because eventually that’s what legislative votes come down to on something like this. Those were the people who were going to go in a voting booth. (personal communication, August 5, 2015).

Since winning legislative support depended on supporters and their voting power, teacher activism, communication networks, and at-home lobbying became important factors.

#### **4.7.1 Teacher activism.**

It was Riley's own political organization and teacher activism that made the difference in rallying EIA supporters (B. Prince, personal communication, August 5, 2015). Due to its commitment to political activism, the 20,000 SCEA members played a central role in building citizen pressure, both at the Statehouse and in legislators' districts. The SCEA was effective due to its membership numbers, ability to mobilize teachers at the local level, lobbying skills, and political clout through candidate endorsements and campaign donations.

Numerically, when you get into that kind of fight, numbers make a difference, plus they (SCEA) had field staff in each region of the state. Unless you know the House or Senate member personally, which they (SCEA) might, like the local Chamber of Commerce might, some volume of contact makes a difference. That's why the SCEA was so critical because they had the biggest number of people" (T. Peterson, personal communication, September 4, 2015).

The strategy to involve teachers was carefully planned. Prior to the 1984 legislative session, the SCEA constructed a political agenda to keep members informed through its newsletter and field organizers. The association held meetings to explain the EIA details to teachers. Letter writing efforts began, and the SCEA designed an EIA campaign lapel sticker in the shape of a copper penny to identify teachers as supporters of the reform bill and sales tax increase.

Most effective to sustaining teacher engagement was keeping members informed on legislative action (J. Grant, personal communication, July 23, 2015). Knowing the specifics of the EIA legislation increased the impact of teacher lobbying. Local SCEA leaders “felt strongly enough that they could always stand up and speak, even if somebody was opposing things” (V. Watson, personal communication, April 23, 2015).

Occasionally, educators’ lobbying plans met with criticism, including when the Charleston County school board chairman raised questions about a letter writing campaign by teachers. However, the district’s superintendent defended the activity, assuring the school board that no school time or supplies were used to write to legislators. Subsequently, the board chairman said the letter writing was “a harmless effort” (Bennett, 1984, January 25, p. 2A).

Some tactics attracted statewide media attention, including when 100 teachers lined up in front of their town’s post office to apply for a custodial job that they said paid better than their teaching salaries. The federal custodian position paid \$19,867. Pointing out that the janitorial job required only a high school degree, the teachers complained that “It would take a master’s degree and 10 years teaching experience to make a beginning level janitor’s salary” (United Press International ,1984, February 12). Despite media coverage, the demonstration resulted in critical editorials, which pointed out the job comparisons were not accurate. Janitors work twelve months, and teachers, 180 days, although one editorial board conceded, “Some teachers are underpaid” (*The Charleston Post and Courier*, 1984, March 7).

The most significant impact was when teachers lobbied the General Assembly during the EIA legislative debates. Which teachers traveled to the Statehouse was

strategically planned to target particular legislators, who were waffling on their EIA support. Lawmakers who adamantly opposed the EIA funding were not approached. Rather, focus was placed on the “fence sitters.” Speaking at a statewide PTA convention, the state Senate Education Committee Chairman Harry Chapman said, “Fence sitting is very popular these days. I think you should make it very uncomfortable for every Senate or House member who’s doing it” (Associated Press, 1984, February 16).

“Quiet intimidation” was Watson’s term for selecting teachers from a legislator’s home district to lobby in Columbia. “It said we’re going to remember” the lawmaker’s opposition (V. Watson, personal communication, April 23, 2015).

Grant said teachers, wearing the SCEA copper penny sticker, sent messages into the chambers asking their legislators to meet them in the Statehouse lobby. After gaining the lawmaker’s support, SCEA members gave their legislators a penny sticker to wear at the Statehouse. “Getting members who opposed it (the EIA) to see legislators wearing the penny sticker and such, helped us build the head of steam we needed to get through the process” (J. Grant, personal communication, July 23, 2015).

SCEA got complaints from legislators about “strong arming them” by publishing their voting records, Grant said. The SCEA penny sticker, Statehouse lobbying, and informing teachers about how legislators voted on the EIA “were specifically-used tactics. It made them (legislators) know someone was watching. They couldn’t be incognito” (J. Grant, personal communication, July 23, 2015).

Sitting with Mrs. Riley, who attended each legislative debate day, teachers filled the Statehouse balconies to track EIA voting. This led legislators to say “all those teachers in the galley. Why weren’t they home teaching?” (Keyserling, 1998, p. 232). In

the lobby, SCEA members monitored attendance of lawmakers to assure they were present for important votes. If a lawmaker changed his support, “We’d turn up the heat on them,” said Grant (personal communication, July 23, 2015).

Although a majority of lobbying teachers were women, this did not lessen their effectiveness with the male-dominated General Assembly. Because the teachers were briefed before entering the Statehouse to lobby, they felt empowered by their knowledge of the EIA plan. “Women are less intimidated by men than men are by men. If you really want to get a point made, just send a woman who’s fired up because she’ll get the point made every time” (J. Grant, personal communication, July 23, 2015).

In addition to watching from the Statehouse balconies and waiting in the lobby, teachers also attended legislative committee meetings, particularly monitoring work on the state budget, which included the tax increase. As the session progressed, the EIA school proposals received few objections from legislators. The strongest opposition was directed at the tax increase and, to a lesser degree, teacher pay raises.

While most legislators agreed South Carolina teachers were underpaid, debate centered on how to distribute increased funding for teacher salaries. The EIA proposed an across-the-board increase of teacher salaries to the Southeastern average. That raised the question whether some teachers deserved a bigger increase than others. “In what way will public education be improved by paying the same inadequate teachers more to do the same inadequate job?” (Shreadley, 1983, November 27).

Legislators voiced similar concerns during the EIA budget debate, proposing alternatives to the across-the-board pay increase. However, teachers’ presence at budget meetings had an impact. In working out a compromise on the pay raises, “House

members wanted to make sure they wouldn't be criticized by teachers back home. Legislators said most of the hyperactivity in the House over the matter Thursday was spurred by heavy pressure from the teachers' lobbies, especially the S.C. Education Association" (Eichel, 1984, March 2). Peterson recalled that teacher criticism back home took a personal turn for one "fence sitting" House member, who said his teacher girlfriend told him that "until he delivered on the EIA he might as well sleep on the sofa" (personal communication, September 4, 2015).

When the state budget committee voted 16-6 to restore full funding for teacher raises, the vote drew "applause from the overflow teacher and PTA crowd who packed the committee room" (Schneider, 1984, February 16). According to news reports, seven legislators, who had been voting against the pay increase, changed their votes.

Even though teachers directed their lobbying efforts at legislative "fence sitters," the influence of their activism also was felt by legislators who staunchly opposed the EIA, especially the sales tax increase. This included House Ways and Means Chairman Tom Mangum, who was a powerful gatekeeper to the state budget. From the outset, Mangum predicted the EIA sales tax would never pass out of his budget committee.

In the aftermath of the 1984 legislative session, *The Charlotte Observer* reported that the House budget chairman was "campaigning hard" for reelection in his home district. The reason for his efforts was his opposition to the EIA sales tax. Due to his outspoken resistance to the reform plan, "Mangum also didn't make friends among teachers, whose statewide professional association has fought vigorously for passage of the Riley plan" (Permutt, 1984, June 1).

Prince said teacher activism was powerful because they would return to their communities and discuss what they saw at the Statehouse with other teachers and community members. “Overall, the SCEA’s strength, like education’s strength, was in places where most of the votes are in terms of legislators” (B. Prince, personal communication, August 5, 2015).

#### **4.7.2 Creating a communication network.**

A grassroots campaign is only as good as its methods of communicating with supporters. A grassroots political movement is not effective unless it can contact members immediately when important events occur. The ability to respond to developments, such as a critical legislative vote, relied on a “really sophisticated communication network” developed specifically for the EIA (T. Peterson, personal communication, September 4, 2015).

At the outset, the “grass tops” task force members were chosen not just for their diversity, but also for their extensive statewide contacts. Before the regional forums, task force members generated local participation through their communication channels. In addition to the task force, each of the seven forums had an organizing committee made up of local leaders from counties in the region. These leaders arranged the place and schedule for the forum, all the while encouraging local turn out.

Each leadership group was well connected. However, for a statewide undertaking based on citizen mobilization, the EIA needed its own unique contact network, one that could directly alert advocates and organizations when a quick response was needed. “So, if you’re just a typical grassroots movement, you wouldn’t even hear about the vote until it happened. In the EIA case, our supporters had to know the vote was coming up the next

day or the next week on four or five big issues or budget items, so they could immediately call or contact their legislators,” Peterson said (personal communication, September 4, 2015).

Three components formed the EIA network. They were phone banks, contact lists compiled from the forums’ small group discussions, and membership rolls from teacher and parent organizations. Through this network, the governor’s office coordinated the messages sent to advocates and developed the most effective strategies to influence legislators.

Contacting supporters was more complicated in the 1980s since communication was limited to telephone calls, mailings, organization newsletters, and associations’ telephone “trees.” With no electronic methods, such as email, websites and social media, the telephone was the quickest form of contact. Consequently, the governor’s office established a telephone bank “hotline” as a specific means of getting word out about the education reform plan.

The phone bank operated for about the first half of the legislative session. The EIA private foundation paid \$500 to set up the arrangement, which was manned by volunteers five days a week. Operating out of Columbia, the majority of the 57 volunteers were educators, which included principals, teachers, and university professors. Other volunteers were Riley’s political supporters and Democratic Party members. The phone bank volunteers answered questions about the specifics of the EIA, but more important, they let supporters know about upcoming legislative votes, and where their lawmakers stood on the reform plan and tax increase.

The membership rolls of well-established education, parent, civic club and good government groups became central components of the EIA network. Most of these organizations had well-developed systems to contact members and were familiar with phone bank operations. In addition, lists compiled from those who attended the forums' small group discussions became a valuable part of the statewide network. During the group discussions, participants were asked for contact information to receive updates as the EIA moved through the General Assembly. During the post-forum discussions, participants also listed activities that they could organize in their communities to support the school reform bill, which broadened local outreach.

The EIA communication network was vital to maintaining grassroots momentum during the legislative session. Education organizations, such as SCEA, PSTA, SCASA, PTAs, and SICs, formed telephone banks not just to contact their own members, but also people who attended the forum small group sessions. At times, county voter registration lists were used to track down constituent telephone numbers in certain legislative districts. Volunteers would "cold call" voters in those districts and ask for their support for the legislation.

During critical Statehouse debates, calls from the telephone banks were strategically organized. Calls were made to citizen supporters in a specific legislator's district, particularly if the lawmaker was known to be a "fence sitter." The phone bank volunteers did not contact the legislator about an upcoming vote. It was the constituent who called the legislator, an effective approach in an election year. According to Peterson, hard core opponents were never called. "We didn't want them to know what we were doing" (T. Peterson, personal communication, September 4, 2015).

“During important House budget votes, we would run the phone banks and ask the education groups to focus on lobbying four or five House or Senate members because the votes were so close,” said Peterson (personal communication, September 4, 2015). “It was just very important that we had the teachers from those different districts to come in (to the Statehouse), and to write letters, and to make phone calls” Watson said, “That was kind of a push all the way through, being in constant contact with them” (personal communication, April 23, 2015).

During an EIA sales tax debate, senior Riley aide Dwight Drake recalled, “The people would call their legislators and give them hell. One by one we picked them off. By the end, some legislators were promising to vote yes if we’d only stop the phone calls” (Hitt, 1986, October, p. 42).

Although not as immediate, newsletters became a good source of information about legislative support. Typical was a special edition of the *School Advisory Council News*. Headlined “State Senate Prepares to Act on Governor’s Package,” a front page article by task force chairman Bill Page asked school advisory parents to contact their state senators, warning the council members that “Senate passage of this legislation is not certain.” Listed on the front page were the names and office telephone numbers of all 46 state senators (Page, 1984, May).

The EIA communication network magnified citizen impact by directing supporters, particularly constituents, to contact specific legislators before specific votes. “What had not been totally factored from their (legislators) experience was this groundswell of popular support that came to them in various ways,” Prince said. “I just think that the public momentum we created gave legislators the sense that ‘I can make

this vote” (personal communication, August 5, 2015). Business support was important “because it gives a brand of credibility, but without that grassroots support, we would not have changed votes” (B. Prince, personal communication, August 5, 2015).

#### **4.7.3 At home lobbying.**

“Just because they’re in church, they don’t get a pass.” That was SCEA lobbyist Joe Grant’s advice to teachers during the grassroots push for the EIA (personal communication, July 23, 2015). This meant promoting the bill’s passage was not confined to the Statehouse or the telephone banks. “You got to get them when they are not in an environment where they feel empowered,” Grant said, indicating their hometowns were a powerful place to influence lawmakers (personal communication, July 23, 2015).

While Statehouse lobbying was one way to influence legislators, “We’d also have people when they’d go home,” Prince said. “There would be teachers and others waiting to meet with them when they went back home. I imagine there were a lot of discussions heard around churches” (personal communications, August 5, 2015). The SCEA’s copper penny sticker also was a way for hometown supporters to show legislators their support. Grant said, teachers distributed the penny stickers to family members and friends. He also said the black churches were actively involved in the at-home lobbying effort (personal communication, July 23, 2015). Getting the support of black churches was “effective at getting black folks involved with politics, and by extension, getting teachers and their families involved in politics was a natural progression” Grant said (personal communication, July 23, 2015).

Our objective, though, were the things that we did: mobilize our own members, mobilize their families and friends, raise political action money, report regularly

on where legislators were on this issue, so members would know where legislators were and lobby the hell out of them. At church, in the grocery store, wherever you see them, jump in their stuff (J. Grant, personal communication, July 23, 2015).

According to Prince, the large public turn out at the regional forums also initiated an at-home lobbying effort.

The force of the forums were people would go back home and talk about it. Talk about it in their neighborhoods. They'd talk about it in their churches. They'd talk about it when they went to PTO meetings. They'd talk about it when they went to Rotary meetings. Then their representative shows up at the Rotary meeting, and they get to ask questions. They get to ask them (legislators) questions about how they feel about the EIA, about education reform (B. Prince, personal communication, August 5, 2015).

Large attendance at the forums "must have kind of shocked them (legislators) when they realized how many thousands of people showed up in support of (school reform) and were working," said Conrad Powell. "And not just show up, but were really for it, and working for it. It's got to have an impact" (personal communication, April 7, 2015).

Although it was an election year, legislators "are astute enough to put their finger to the wind and feel what's happening," said Prince. "Plus, in terms of support of what they were hearing back home, it was overwhelmingly in support of the package. Not in support necessarily of the penny, but we had people hammering away about the package" (personal communication, August 5, 2015).

From the outset, Riley and his staff understood the best chance of passing the EIA and the sales tax increase was “to build public support that ultimately would translate into legislative support” (D. Drake and B. Prince, personal communication, July 25, 1983). No one factor in the year-long EIA campaign tipped the legislative balance in favor of the school reform plan. Instead, it was the constant interaction between the “grass top” stakeholders and their grassroots counterparts that rallied public action for passage of the education improvement legislation.

## CHAPTER 5

### IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

From all outward appearances, the effort to pass the Education Improvement Act and sales tax increase had all the trappings of a political campaign: a catchy slogan, paid TV ads, lapel stickers, fly-around press conferences, statewide televised speeches, and massive earned media coverage. However, the initiative was less about the glitz of rallies and sign-waving advocates, and more about the practical construction of a grassroots citizen movement.

#### 5.1 Discussion of Findings

“Grassroots” is an often-heard organizational description that belies the difficulty in constructing one. Public activism doesn’t spring up from the ground without cultivation. Instead, a citizen social movement is developmental, moving from one logical step to the next until the group feels empowered enough to stand up on its own (Rocha, 1997).

In the aftermath of *A Nation At Risk*, the need for education improvement was at the center of a national discussion. With many legislatures across the South opposed to more money for schools, southern governors mobilized the public to support increased funding by linking better education to better jobs (Gitterman, 2011, p. 38).

In a study of nationwide education reform, Chance (1986) stated that Riley’s grassroots approach to improving education was different from any other state’s reform effort. While Riley borrowed William Winter’s idea of public forums to generate support

for school reform, he took this concept a step further by building a sense of citizen ownership from the beginning of the EIA effort.

According to Rocha (1997), there are four steps on the citizen empowerment ladder. First is when the individual gains a feeling of power by associating with another, such as a charismatic leader; second, is the development of self-confidence; third, self-confidence grows into feelings of assertion, and fourth, the citizen gains “strength from serving/influencing others” and a feeling of “moralized action” (Rocha, 1997, p. 33). These steps to citizen empowerment have direct parallels to the EIA initiative to build grassroots support.

When Riley made school reform the sole focus of his office, he shared the power of the governorship with public education’s natural constituency, teachers and parents. Paulo Freire (1970) wrote that the route to human agency -- or action -- is the sharing of power between leaders and participants. It is through a dialogue between a leader and participants that all become “jointly responsible for a process in which they all grow” (Freire, 1970, p. 80). This assertion supports findings by the Federal Election Commission that many people vote simply because “they were asked to vote by a candidate, political party, or a friend” (Stein, Leighly & Owens, 2005, p. 6). Therefore, the sharing of power between Riley and grassroots education supporters encouraged public engagement in the political process.

However, Gaventa and Barrett (2010) stated that citizens engagement in social movements “do not arise automatically, but need intermediary measures” (p. 59). In their study of citizen movements in 20 countries, Gaventa and Barrett (2010) found

Successful outcomes are not a straight line but linked through organizing skills and thickness of civic networks. As individuals grow in their sense of self efficacy and engagement, they benefit from a thickening of alliances and relationships that in turn encourage greater participation (p. 30).

From the outset, the EIA's strategies were specifically aimed at developing feelings of assertion and "moralized action" among supporters that were necessary to build grassroots activism (Rocha, 1997, p. 33). The first empowerment step was reached when Riley committed his sole attention to building support for the EIA. Developing supporters' self-confidence was accomplished through the regional forums and community small group sessions. The forums' large public turnout generated the sense of togetherness or "thickening of alliances" that led to even greater citizen participation (Gaventa and Barrett, 2010, p. 30).

Research indicates that frequent political discussions and the influence of groups are important to voter participation. Abrams, Iverson and Soskice (2005) found that the best predictor of voting behavior is "interpersonal discussion networks," made up of family, friends, coworkers, and social groups (p. 2). The more frequent the political discussions, the more likely it is the participants will vote. The incentive to vote "depends on the strength of collective organizations, such as parties, unions, and churches" (Abrams, Iverson & Soskice, 2005, p. 10).

Pippa Norris (2002) found similar results in her study of political action theory. People are motivated to engage in political causes according to their personal characteristics and their social connections, such as family, co-workers, and neighbors, according to Norris. Also, political motivation is an affective response to a cause that will

benefit the individual, such as linking education improvement to economic development. Therefore, it is a combination of civic networks and organizations, political discussions, and an affective response to a beneficial cause that can generate personal political action.

Achieving what Rocha termed the “Socio-Political” level of citizen engagement was essential to passing the EIA . When reaching that level, citizens have gained the power and confidence necessary to engage in political action, such as lobbying and voting to influence legislative responsiveness (Rocha, 1997, p. 37).

Recommendations to improve South Carolina’s public schools were not the obstacle to legislative approval of the EIA. With the exception of teacher pay, most lawmakers agreed with the bill’s proposed reforms. Instead, opposition centered on the one cent sales tax increase to permanently fund the plan. Up for reelection, most legislators immediately rejected the tax increase. With the November elections ahead, the power of mobilized supporters was critical to pressuring the General Assembly to pass the EIA tax. Therefore, essential to passage of the EIA was implementing a strategy to develop citizen empowerment, build local and statewide civic networks, and create a sense of ownership in supporters that would result in an active grassroots movement.

Data from this case study supported this strategy. Among the findings were that the three most effective ways to galvanize grassroots voter support were the citizen discussion networks, inclusion of education stakeholders in developing the reform plan, and Riley’s use of his gubernatorial stature.

### **5.1.1 Citizen discussion networks**

As previously described, numerous studies have shown that the influence of others – family, friends, and social groups -- inspire political interest and voter activism. These

“interpersonal discussion networks” can increase the frequency of political discussions, which in turn increase the likelihood of voting (Abrams, Iverson & Soskice, 2005).

Riley developed a number of “interpersonal discussion networks” unique to the EIA. These discussions served to encourage citizen support and to educate potential voters to the personal benefits of the EIA, thereby enhancing the potential for “correct voting” (Lau, Andersen & Redlawsk, 2008). Primary among them were the forums’ small group discussion sessions.

Based on community action research and extensive field testing, Winecoff and Powell structured the forums’ small group discussions both to foster a sense of self-efficacy among participants and to build a discussion network through group exchanges of ideas and suggestions. It is estimated that between 900 to 1,500 people stayed for the small group discussions after each reform. Divided into groups of ten, these discussions gave participants a chance to learn more about the school reform proposal, as well as an important opportunity to consider ideas face-to-face with other community members.

In her research on political action, Norris (2002) noted the importance of providing “the kind of face-to-face networking needed to inspire social trust leading to sustained citizen activism” (p.3). The forums’ large public turnout also generated the sense of togetherness that Rocha (1997) stated was an important rung on the ladder to citizen empowerment (p. 33). In addition to the forum small group discussions, lobbying efforts in legislators’ home districts were another example of the power of face-to-face networking described by Norris.

The findings of this case study suggested that home district lobbying by citizens had a significant impact. Discussions of school reform among family and friends, in church

congregations, and at community social clubs, provided the basis for successful local lobbying. The at-home lobbying effort allowed one-on-one dialogues or small group exchanges between local EIA supporters and their district legislators. As the SCEA lobbyist said, home lobbying got legislators out of their Statehouse empowerment zone and into the sphere of their local constituents, who could affect the outcome of November legislative elections (J. Grant, personal communication, July 23, 2015).

Constructing the EIA's statewide communication network was another manifestation of Abrams, Iverson and Soskice's (2005) interpersonal discussion groups. Although not face-to-face, the EIA's unique communication network was an amalgamation of teacher, parent, civic groups, and community organizations throughout the state, united in an effort to sustain pressure on the General Assembly. This tight-knit alliance of grassroots supporters organized activities, such as the EIA hotline, letter writing and telephone campaigns, and the distribution of specific EIA legislative information to parent and community organizations. Also included in the EIA communication network were participants from the forums' small group sessions, who asked to be contacted.

Including all stakeholders from the beginning was fundamental to constructing Riley's "grass tops/grassroots" organization strategy. While the grassroots stimulated citizen lobbying, the "grass tops" represented groups who could influence and energize their member networks at the grassroots. Although Riley had natural allies for school reform among educators, he could not assume they would automatically buy-in to any school improvement plan. It was critical from the outset that teachers were included as important stakeholders in the EIA's development. Inclusion would result in ownership,

and Riley needed the membership numbers of the teachers' associations and their well-established statewide communication organization to reach reluctant legislators.

### **5.1.2 Including teachers as policy stakeholders**

In national studies, researchers have found teachers to feel “out of the loop” in the formulation of education policy (Billup, A., 2001, March 26). A 2001 report from Public Agenda concluded that most teachers were not part of school policymaking, and many teachers felt that policymakers were not interested in their input. The study labeled teachers a “neglected constituency” that felt “buffeted by forces beyond their control” and “decisions are taken without their input” (Farkas, Foley & Duffett, 2001, p. 18). A 2009 national survey, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, also concluded that teacher opinions were overlooked in the development of school policy (Sawchuk, 2010).

I began this case study on the premise that in 1984 there was no strong statewide structure on which Riley could build his engagement strategy. As researcher, I assumed that South Carolina teachers were a “neglected constituency” that could have little impact on the 1984 EIA initiative. I based my assumptions on personal observations of current teacher political disengagement in South Carolina, despite recent policy debates on such controversial issues as teacher report cards and pay for performance.

My assumptions appeared to be verified by a 2009 study that concluded less than half the state's certified teachers voted in the 2006 statewide election, and a third could not vote because they were not registered. However, in the course of this case study, I found that the climate for teacher inclusion and activism in 1984 was much stronger than I originally presumed. In fact, teacher inclusion and activism supplied a strong foundation

for Riley's public engagement initiative. Educators also provided the numbers to provide a formidable lobbying group.

Like today, South Carolina's public school teachers did not have the clout of collective bargaining in 1984. However, they did have a well-established teacher association with a history of political involvement. The SCEA not only had a strong statewide organizational structure, but with 20,000 members, it was the largest education group in the state.

The SCEA's organization became the foundation of the EIA's communication network. The teacher association provided an efficient information link from its state offices to local school representatives. Its established communication "tree" allowed the quick distribution of legislative information. Other education groups, such as the Parent/Teacher Associations or the School Improvement Councils, had local visibility and community contacts, but they did not have the communication efficiency of the SCEA.

Also, the SCEA embraced political engagement. It maintained lobbyists at the Statehouse, encouraged members to become actively involved in education issues, endorsed candidates, and donated to political causes. Although the newly formed PSTA had members in most school districts, it did not sanction political activity by its teachers nor did it have the SCEA's membership numbers.

Therefore, the SCEA's political activism was most important to the EIA's Statehouse lobbying effort. Its members became the core of the initiative. This is not to imply that other education groups did not engage in lobbying activities. PTA membership increased by 11,000 members during the 1983-1984 school year. The SCPTA chairman said the

organization's statewide membership grew to 122,000, due to its support of the EIA and increased public exposure (Associated Press, 1984, May 13). However, SCEA teachers, wearing their copper EIA penny stickers, were the most visible group of supporters in the Statehouse lobby.

In her research on political action, Norris (2002) spoke of the importance of mobilizing agencies to build and sustain citizens' political engagement. "Many cultural attitudes and values may shape activism, including the sense that the citizen can affect the policy process and political interest, as well as a general orientation of support from the political system" Norris wrote (2002, p. 8). While mobilizing associations are important to political efficacy, Norris (2002) stated that personal motivation is a key factor in civic activism. Thus, including teacher representatives as important "grass tops" stakeholders became critical to the EIA's lobbying success. However, as explained in the case study findings, this inclusion was not always smooth.

A direct personal benefit for teachers was the EIA's salary increase. With the average teacher salary at \$16,428 – 48<sup>th</sup> in the country -- raising teacher salaries to the \$17,715 Southeastern average was a priority for educators. The proposed pay raises constituted 40% of the \$210 million school reform plan; therefore, pressuring the General Assembly to support the sales tax increase was essential (Arnold, 1983, July 28).

Despite the desire for improved salaries, teacher representatives argued among themselves and with Riley over the pay raises. During task force meetings, the SCEA insisted that teacher pay raises equal the national average. It was only through Riley's personal intervention that the SCEA agreed to the Southeastern average, thus preserving their lobbying power on behalf of the EIA.

### 5.1.3 Growing grassroots empowerment

The power of the governorship and Riley's personal persuasion was the third component of building and sustaining the "grass tops/ grassroots" coalition. At the grass tops, business supporters had influence, and educators, particularly the SCEA, were experienced lobbyists. However, building the confidence of grassroots supporters to use their voting power to influence legislators was fundamental to the EIA's success.

Riley's grassroots strategy was unique in the national school reform movement. It also was unprecedented in South Carolina policymaking. Riley's call for public involvement through the EIA forums, the paid public service ads, and the statewide television address was extraordinary. While polling indicated public support for the EIA, it also indicated that people were uncertain about how to exert political pressure.

Paulo Freire (1970) wrote that the route to human agency is the sharing of power between leaders and participants. It is through a dialogue between the leader and participants that all become "jointly responsible for a process in which they all grow" (p. 80). Consequently, it was Riley who shared the power of his office to build the self-confidence and sense of togetherness that his supporters would need to assert themselves into the legislative arena.

According to Rocha (1997), the first rung on the citizen empowerment ladder is the sense of power gained through association with a charismatic leader. This first step was taken when Riley gave his sole attention to building public support for the EIA. As governor, Riley built a sense of shared power and joint responsibility with EIA supporters. As the confidence of supporters grew, so did their involvement, until the movement reached the benchmark of collaborative political activism (Rocha, 1997, p.

38). Rocha (1997) observed that “although the individual is the ultimate receptor of benefits, political power is the goal, and political process the means” (p. 40). Therefore, by building a ladder to citizen empowerment, Riley succeeded in mobilizing a grassroots movement that brought pressure on the Legislature to approve the EIA and its tax increase.

#### **5.1.4 Women in policymaking**

Overall, women were the largest cadre of EIA supporters. This was true at the Statehouse, as well as at the regional forums. It is estimated over 70% of the forum participants were women. In addition to the SCEA, women dominated the SICs and PTAs across the state. By extension, it can be assumed that women also spearheaded at-home lobbying, which proved to be an effective method of influencing legislators.

In political circumstances like the EIA initiative, feminist theory points to one reason why women can become aggressive advocates in a political environment dominated by men. Primarily, it is because public education is considered a maternal policy issue. According to McDonagh (2009), maternal policies are those which emphasize care and concern for society’s individuals. These are education, health care, assistance for the needy, among others. When a government adopts maternal policies, it reinforces women’s place and value in the policy making sphere. This was particularly true for women lobbying for the EIA.

Since the late 1970s, public education funding or improvement were not priority issues for the S.C. Legislature. Even though South Carolina ranked among the bottom five states in per student funding, teacher salaries, student academic achievement, and high school completion rates, this did not motivate the General Assembly to act. Even

increased school funding and teacher salaries in other southern states did not influence the Legislature to make education a priority.

Maternal public policy is “crucial” to public acceptance of women as political leaders, according to McDonagh (2009, p. 81). While the Legislature had few women as role models for political activism, the SCEA’s stance toward political involvement overcame that deficit during the EIA debate. The teacher association had the numbers and the organizational structure to recruit and train women as lobbyists, inspire grassroots advocacy among other support groups, as well as encourage at-home lobbying among friends and family.

While Riley and other male statewide political were the public face of the EIA, there is little doubt that women were the face of its most vocal advocates. According to McDonagh (2009), a feminist theorist, the visibility of women in policy making and the corresponding impact of maternal social policies extend to voter attitudes toward government and increase the likelihood that citizens will vote (p. 99). It can be argued that vigorous female advocacy at the Statehouse and in legislators’ home districts made a major contribution to the citizen activism needed to pass the EIA. The women advocates represented votes, and votes were important to legislators in an election year.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

In his examination of school reform in the 1980s, Chance (1986) wrote that South Carolina’s school improvement plan “is widely regarded as the one of the most cooperatively developed programs in the nation” (p. 48). Unlike the other six states examined, Chance wrote, “Because of its many visible points of entry, the South Carolina process is widely described as a ‘bottom-up’ model,” resulting in a “high level of public

support” (p. 48). According to Chance (1986), the evolution of the EIA reform legislation was less the product of carefully preconceived models than evolving concepts.

A great deal of emphasis was placed on community forums presided over by prominent political figures. This emphasis on public participation, ‘grassroots’ involvement, appears to underlie the frequent use of the ‘bottom up’ appellation in that state (p. 53).

Chance’s assessment of a “bottom up” strategy is correct, considering grassroots voters were essential to legislative approval of a tax increase in an election year. However, his conclusion that the EIA effort was more evolving than carefully planned is contrary to the findings of this case study.

In the July 1983 staff memo to Riley, a specific plan was outlined and strictly followed during the effort to win legislative approval of the EIA. Although likened to a political campaign, the EIA strategy mirrored theories advanced by political action research and citizen empowerment and engagement studies. EIA strategies guided supporters through the steps to empowerment until they reached Rocha’s Socio-Political level, the benchmark for political activism and described as “transformative populism” (1997, p. 37).

Public engagement was carefully cultivated by making Riley highly visible during the regional forums and the Education Day school tours. Citizen buy-in was accomplished through the community small group sessions. Not only were the sessions organized so that participants felt free to voice opposition to the plan, but also to make suggestions for changes. Summaries of group recommendations were given to the participants and the media, adding validity to the importance placed on citizen input.

Paid advertising was produced to “teach” citizens how to lobby legislators, and a unique communication network was designed to keep supporters informed and to sustain grassroots participation through the legislative session.

What could not be planned is how actively the public would become involved. The affective nature of legislation to improve the schools of South Carolina’s children certainly was a personal motivating factor for many families and educators, reinforced by the state’s rock bottom national rankings. Salary increases also added to teacher motivation.

The low political status of women, who comprised the majority of its supporters, could have been a hindrance; however, this challenge was overcome by the established organization of the SCEA, the majority female association that encouraged political involvement. The SCEA served as a model for other groups to approach their legislators. This was particularly true of the influential at-home lobbying of legislators by neighbors, family members, church congregations, and community groups.

Riley’s ability to hold together the diverse group of stakeholders also constructed and perpetuated activism. Described as a low-key leader who preferred an inclusionary approach to policy making, rather than grandstanding and division, Riley gained the trust of educators, the business community, and the public by giving all stakeholders a voice from the outset.

It is impossible to guess whether passage of the EIA and penny sales tax increase could have occurred at another time. Certainly, the initiative came during a period when the nation feared it was falling behind other countries due to failing schools and failing students. This placed school reform on the national radar. Believing that good education

was linked to good jobs, southern governors had begun their efforts to drag up their states from the bottom of income and school national rankings even before *A Nation At Risk* was published. However, this confluence of events allowed South Carolina the opportunity to enact comprehensive school reform and better education funding, an initiative that has not been repeated, or attempted, since 1984.

### **5.3 Future Research**

This case study examined how the public and South Carolina teachers influenced the development and enactment of major school reform and funding legislation. Left unanswered is why the same degree of activism is not present today.

Many say the EIA and tax increase would not have passed without vigorous educator lobbying and the implied threat to the re-election of legislators who opposed it. A 2009 study of public school teacher voting during the 2006 statewide election indicated that over 50% of South Carolina's teachers either chose not to vote in the 2006 elections or could not vote because they were not registered (<http://www.risesc.org/>). The 2006 election was significant since it involved elections for governor, state education superintendent, and candidates for both the S.C. House of Representatives and state Senate.

The SCEA and PSTA still employ Statehouse lobbyists, but the combined number of teachers belonging to the two association has declined over the last 30 years. Current data show that less than 40% of the state's certified teachers belong to either organization. With low voting participation and no statewide organizational structure to make their voices heard at the Statehouse, the education community in the Palmetto State appears to be largely disengaged from state policy making. Consequently, educators seem

silent or passive when it comes to even controversial legislative proposals that would affect their classrooms, school funding, and accountability measures.

Certainly contributing to this silence is the lack of statewide education leadership, which political activism and public engagement research indicate are critical to citizen empowerment. For over ten years, South Carolina's governors have not placed public schools among their priorities. Public education often is not listed among the recommendations promoted during the governor's annual State of the State address to the General Assembly. Gubernatorial actions also have undermined education funding through active promotion of public funding for private school vouchers and the vetoing of education appropriations in the state budget.

At the very least, the climate for public education in South Carolina has changed dramatically. This may be due to the state's growing political conservatism or the rise of Libertarian-leaning politics. The impact of federal top-down legislation, such as the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act, which enacted strict test score accountability, or the 2009 Race To The Top program, which advocates teacher pay based on student standardized test scores, may also contribute to teacher disengagement. However, no matter the cause or causes, South Carolina's educators are disengaged.

In light of the important difference that teacher voices made in the grassroots movement to pass the EIA, exploring teacher policy disengagement in South Carolina is an important topic for future research.

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## APPENDIX A – INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND CODING SCHEMA

### Specific interview questions:

- 1) How were you or your organization involved in the strategy to build support for passage of the 1984 S.C. Education Improvement Act?
- 2) What strategies did you or your organization employ to build educator, legislative, business, and citizen support for passage of the legislation?
- 3) What obstacles did you or your organization encounter when organizing and implementing this support effort?
- 4) In your opinion, what was the most effective strategy used to win legislative approval?
- 5) In your opinion, what was the impact of citizen engagement on passage of the legislation?

### Broad-based topics from interview questions

- Initial strategies
- Organizing strategies
- Engaging citizen support
- Sustaining engagement
- Obstacles encountered
- Most effective strategy
- Impact of citizen engagement

### Codes and coding colors

1. **Initial**
2. **Organizing**
3. **Engagement**
4. **Sustaining**
5. **Obstacles**
6. **Most Effective**
7. **Citizen Impact**

## APPENDIX B – DATA ANALYSIS CODED TRANSCRIPT IMAGE

The image shows a Microsoft Word document titled "Coded Prince interview [Compatibility Mode] - Word". The document contains a transcript with line numbers 467 to 492. The transcript is as follows:

467 SH Do you think paid media was a big deal just to keep it before the people? I'm  
 468 trying to get you to say how did you keep it before the public after the State of the  
 469 State? Of course, it was in the news all the time, and there were editorials.

470 BP That's all we did. All the things we talked about. The governor would go places  
 471 for other things. He might go to make a speech about – speeches were all about  
 472 education. While I'm making a speech in Anderson, I'm going to run by the  
 473 morning call-in show in Anderson. We kept up that kind of activity to keep this  
 474 thing at all levels.

475 (39:53)

476 I want to get back to the speech thing. I think that was the first time that had been  
 477 done in the context of an issue like that by a governor. But for everything else we  
 478 had done to lay the foundation, that speech would have been a two or three day  
 479 news story, and everything would have gotten internalized to the process.

480 SH Internalized meaning at the Statehouse. It would just be the legislative football  
 481 game.

482 BP Yes. The inside game at that point. The inside game in the legislature was  
 483 always going to be our worst enemy. We had to keep this a public issue, a public  
 484 education issue. That's why we had these other things going on to keep the  
 485 pressure – the grassroots effort. Riley and Mike Daniel kept up their public  
 486 appearances talking about education, talking it at different forums still doing  
 487 these media.

488 I know we did the big newspapers, the editorial boards, but I think that was pre-  
 489 speech or right after. But all those types of thing continued. At that point, it  
 490 becomes...you've done all the glitz and that. The forums were part of the glitz as  
 491 well as the substance. The TV speech was defining the issue, talking about it in a  
 492 futurist, where as the State of the State was part of the legislative agenda as it

The right-hand sidebar shows a list of codes and their corresponding text:

- HUGULEY, SALLY > How to sustain public
- HUGULEY, SALLY That's all RWR did in speeches
- HUGULEY, SALLY SUSTAINING – RWR'S
- HUGULEY, SALLY November speech first time a
- HUGULEY, SALLY ENGAGEMENT – UNIQUE
- HUGULEY, SALLY October 14, 2015  
Previous activities laid foundation for the TV speech
- HUGULEY, SALLY October 22, 2015  
SUSTAINING – TV SPEECH
- HUGULEY, SALLY Worst enemy – keeping it inside
- HUGULEY, SALLY OBSTACLE – INSIDE
- HUGULEY, SALLY "We had to keep this a public
- HUGULEY, SALLY MOST EFFECTIVE
- HUGULEY, SALLY Maintain public pressure
- HUGULEY, SALLY IMPACT – KEEPING IT #
- HUGULEY, SALLY Forums glitz
- HUGULEY, SALLY ENGAGEMENT
- HUGULEY, SALLY TV speech defined issue
- HUGULEY, SALLY ENGAGEMENT – TV

## APPENDIX C – DATA ANALYSIS SPREADSHEET IMAGE

EXCEL -- CITIZEN IMPACT - Excel

1	Line #	Interviewee	Excerpt	CB: Citizen Impact
11	402	Prince	"So that's probably the strongest group (SCEA) we had and our own political organization"	RWR political network
12	410	Prince	Force of forums, people talked about it in neighborhoods, churches, PTO meetings, Rotary meetings. Asked legislators about the EIA	Grassroots lobbying at home
13	435	Prince	'...because of Richard W. Riley.	RWR leadership style
14	437	Prince	RWR "most stubborn about we weren't going to change this package."	RWR leadership style
15	446	Prince	"While critical and absolutely important to it (business support), the key to passing that was the public support we had. Because eventually that's what legislative votes come down to on something like this."	Public political impact
19	55	RWR	"We were trying to get the people involved – the general public involved – and that was a real key to the whole thing. You couldn't get the legislature to pass a major education reform, unless you had very strong grassroots support."	Public involvement
20	69	RWR	After speeches, small group sessions	Small group sessions
21	72	RWR	"...really talk about the programs. What programs did you think we ought to have or not have, and how are we going to pay for it. You, really go into the details. Let people themselves talk about what we needed to do"	Small group input
22	225	RWR	SCEA "boy, they were strong, and Elizabeth Gressette was strong."	Strong teacher assn
23	240	RWR	"This was public involvement. You know, and we weren't just deciding in a committee room. We wanted the people to have a stake in it, and the teachers, of course, were part of the people."	Grassroots involvement of public & teachers
24	243	RWR	Teachers were talking to parents who were talking to students. "...and it really became probably as big a grassroots education effort that ever occurred in this country."	Biggest national grassroots movement