

Dental Therapists: An Innovative Approach to Expanding Access

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*National Indian Health Board
The Dental Therapist Update
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Community Catalyst

- Advocates for high-quality, affordable health care for all
- National partners
- Networks in 40+ states, connect states
- Issue campaigns
- New models of care
- Support of major foundations

Oral Health is Important to Overall Health.

Yet tens of millions of Americans can't get the dental care they need.



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What are the Problems

- Shortage of dentists in rural, low-income and underserved urban communities
- Medicaid acceptance
- Coverage
- Delivery system-Lack of a strong safety-net

A Solution: Dental Therapy



- Model began in the 1920s
- Dental therapists practice in 54 countries, including the US, Canada, England, Australia, New Zealand and The Netherlands
- Under supervision of dentists, dental therapists can practice in remote settings where there is need for additional provider capacity
- Evidence shows care provided by dental therapists is high quality, cost effective and safe
- History of providing routine and preventive care in community settings

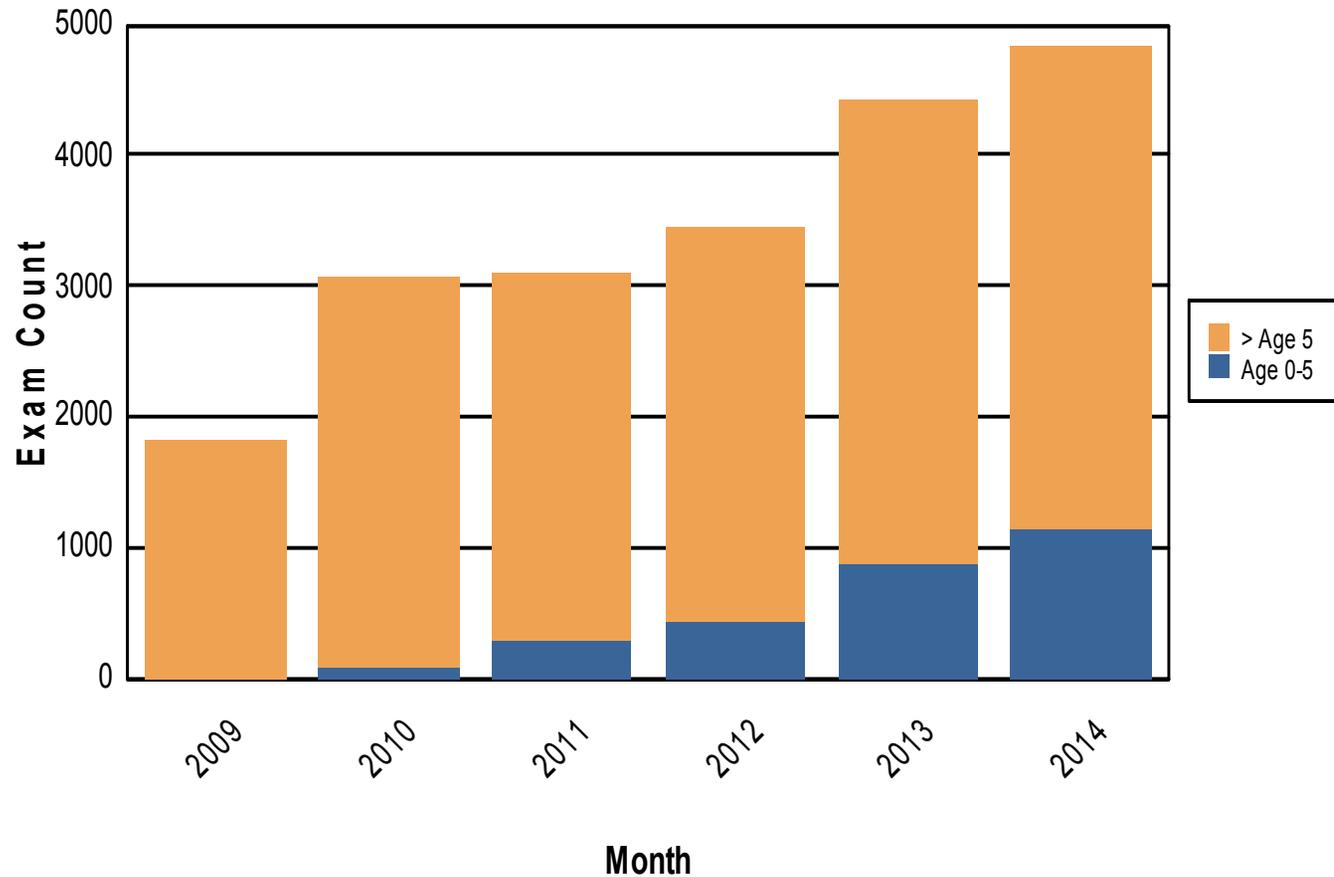
Alaska's Dental Therapists

- 25 dental therapists increased access to care for over 40,000 Alaska Natives
- Provide culturally competent care
- Produce high patient satisfaction rates
- Reduce amount of emergency care
- Increase preventive care
- Create jobs and generate economic impact
 - Created 76 full time jobs per year with total personal income of \$4.4 million
 - Net economic effect of program is \$9.7 million

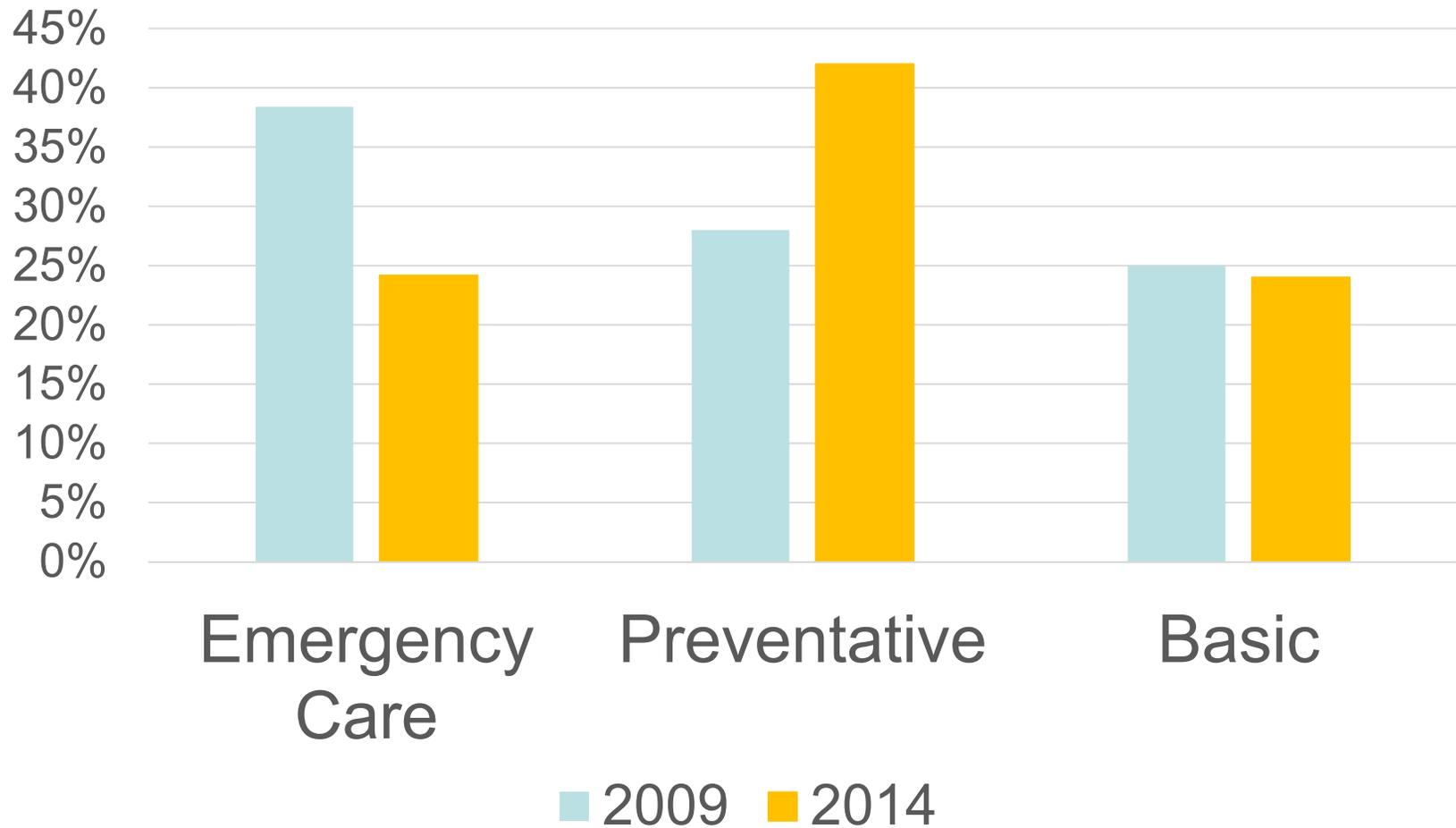
YKHC Access Expansion

Dental Exams per Month

Age 0-5 vs >5



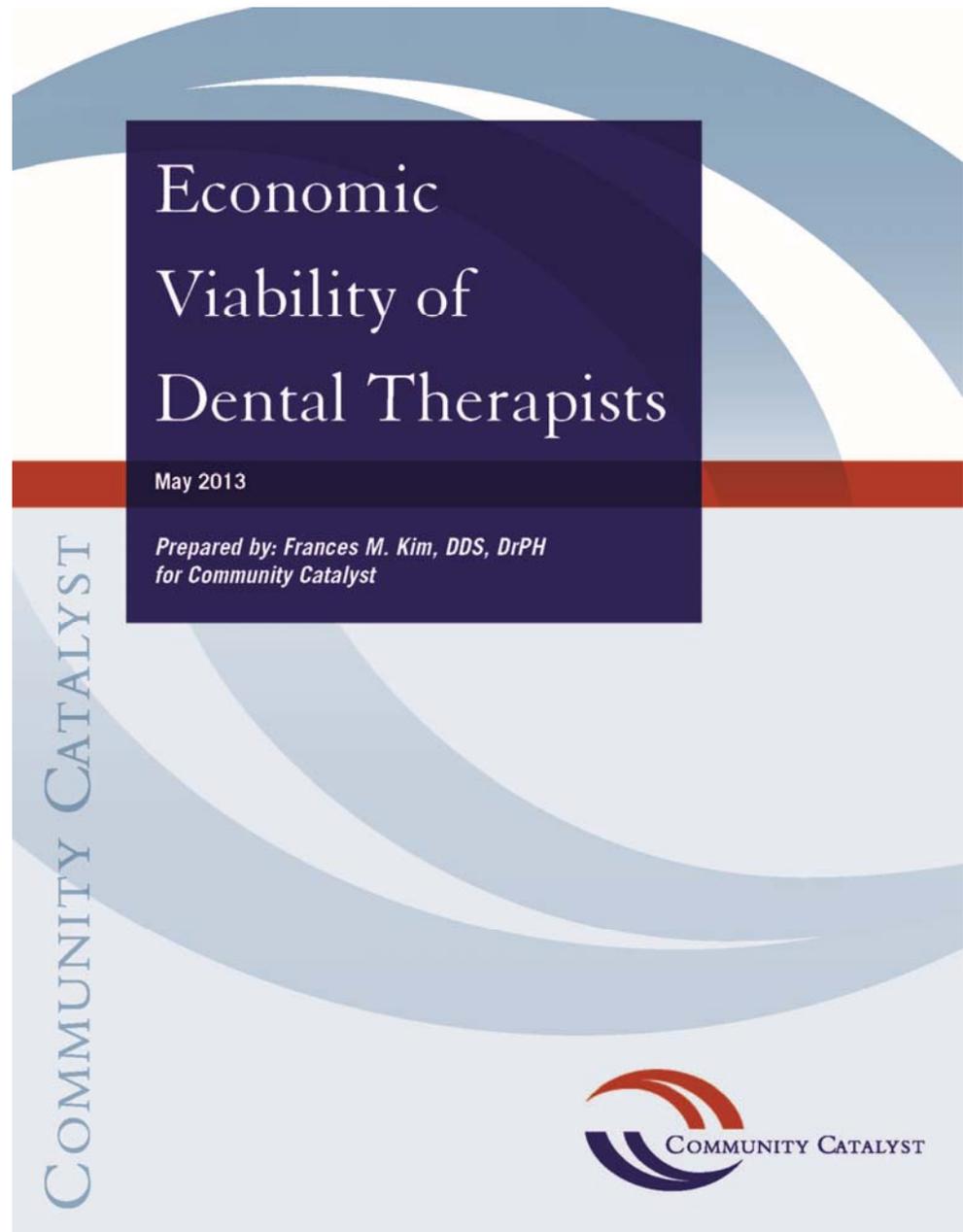
YKHC Service Distribution: 2009 vs. 2014



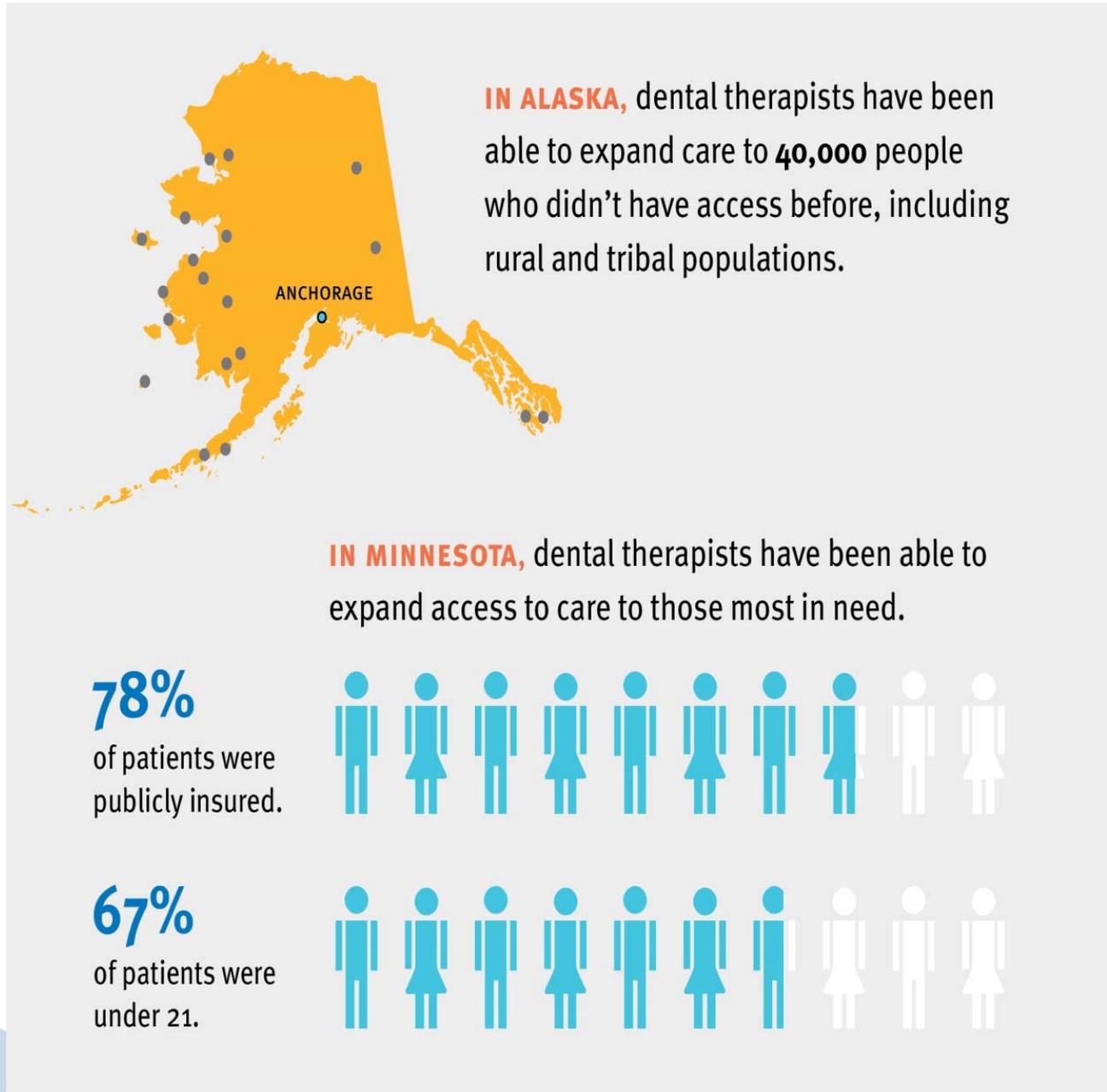
2014 Minnesota Department of Health Evaluation of Dental Therapists

- Increased access for underserved patients and communities
- Reduced wait times and travel times (especially for rural communities)
- Reduced clinic operating costs serving more patients for the same amount of money
- Increased dental team productivity
- No quality or safety complaints or concerns
- Practiced in a variety of treatment settings
- Dental therapists can potentially reduce ER visits

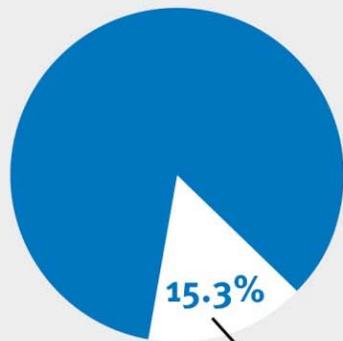
Economic Viability of Dental Therapists



Who are dental therapists treating?



What services are dental therapists providing?



84.7%

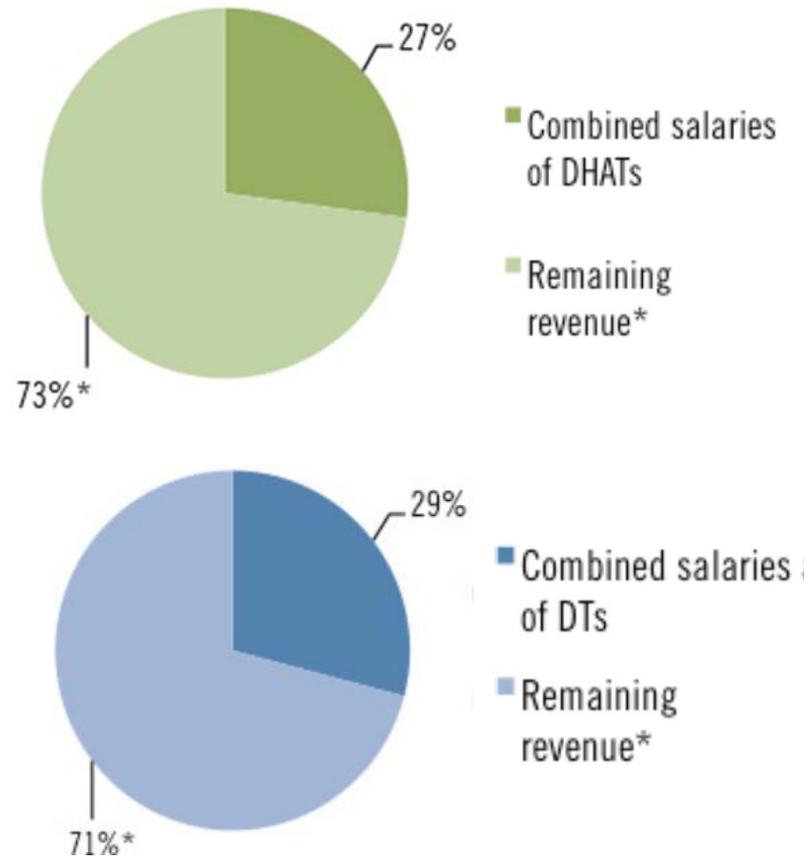
of the care dental therapists provide is
PREVENTIVE and **ROUTINE**.

15.3%

Other procedures in
Dental Therapist
scope of practice

Financial Impact of Expanding the Dental Team

According to a May, 2013 Community Catalyst study on the economic viability of dental therapists in Alaska and Minnesota, dental therapists cost their employers less than 30 cents for every dollar of revenue they generate.



**Total Revenue Generated by Advanced Dental Therapists and Dental Therapists in Minnesota - green
Dental Health Aide Therapists in Alaska - blue**

What's Next?

1. Implications of ACA & Indian Health Care Improvement Act Language
2. Demonstrations
3. Tribal only legislation
4. State scope of practice campaigns

Campaign Development

Planning and implementing advocacy campaigns requires:

- The identification of “inside” decision-makers who can function as “champions” for the desired policy outcomes;
- Building and maintaining alliances to expand, support and reduce opposition;
- Orchestrating the involvement of campaign partners and allies so they do the right thing at the right time in decision-making processes; and
- Closely tracking the policy process for intervention opportunities, then move quickly to take advantage of them.

Developing Smart, Short Messages



Example - Simplified messaging for Washington

All Washingtonians should be able to get dental care when they need it, regardless of where they live or how much money they have. Yet many can't. Dental therapists can help people get the care they need to be healthy.

Dental therapists will:

- **Expand dental care access** to families and communities.
- **Save money** by providing routine, cost-effective care and preventing dental emergencies.
- **Support stronger communities** by creating good jobs and ensuring good oral health for everyone.

It's time to bring dental therapists to Washington.

Responding to misinformation

THE EVIDENCE IS CLEAR:

Dental Therapists Are Good for Vermont

ZERO

patient complaints in 10 years in Alaska and 4 years in Minnesota

1,000 HOURS

working directly with a dentist before they are licensed

85%

of the care dental therapists provide is routine & preventive.

\$93

a year for dental therapists' malpractice insurance

Review of

1,100 SCIENTIFIC STUDIES

found dental therapist provide high quality care.

Pyramid of Engagement

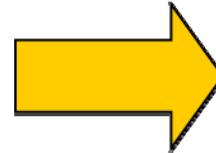


Understanding Your Targets: Influencing Policymakers

Substance

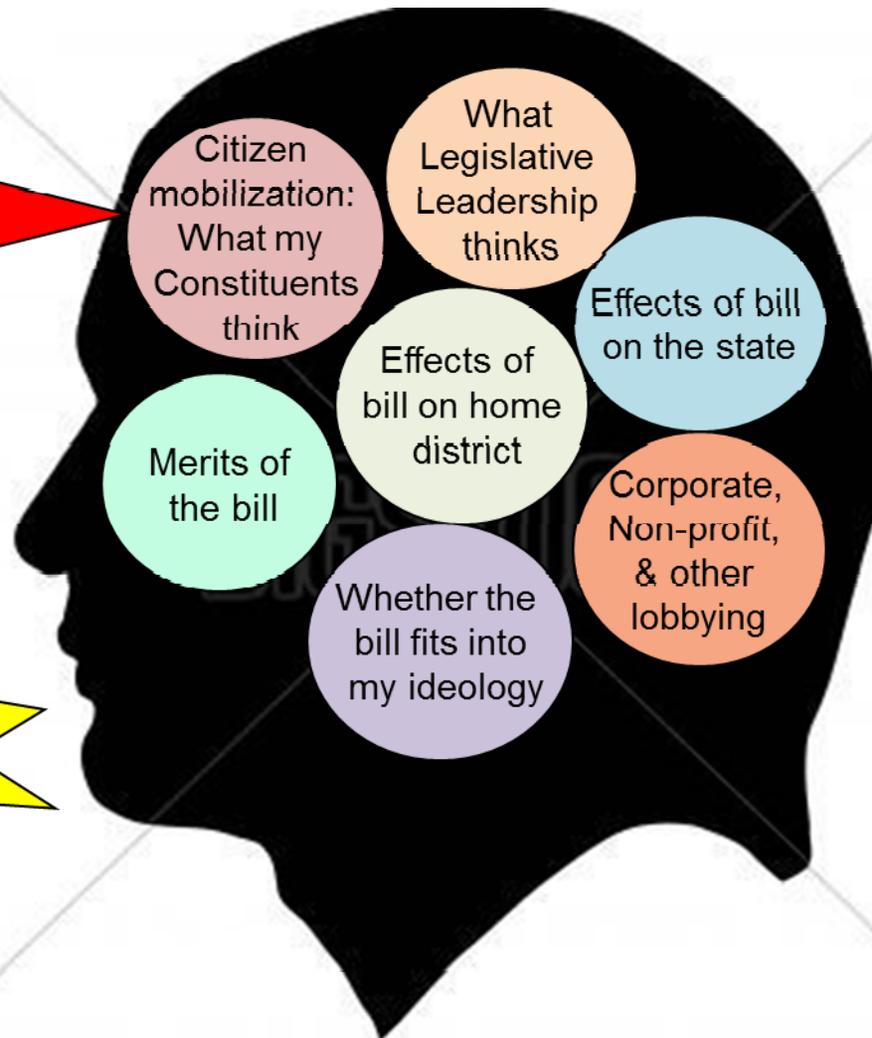


Influence



How a legislator decides to vote

On-line advocacy is only one piece of citizen mobilization



Legislators take into account a variety of opinions and factors when considering which way to vote.

They cannot be an expert on every bill, and even if they are, the policy merits aren't the only thing they consider.



Thank You

