



ANN WARNER LLC

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Integrated Government Relations Strategies: Coalition Restructuring and Management

CHALLENGE

Ann Warner LLC (AWLLC) was retained by a 30-year-old coalition of freight rail shippers whose membership had declined due to lack of progress on its Federal legislative agenda and dissatisfaction with how the coalition had been managed.

AWLLC was tasked with:

1. Evaluating the existing structure of the coalition and its effectiveness as an advocate for reliable and affordable rail freight service.
2. Assessing the coalition's current brand recognition and determine if rebranding was appropriate.
3. Proposing an appropriate structure for the coalition, including a dues structure that would make membership more affordable to potential members.
4. Creating a strategic advocacy and communication plan to engage the U.S. Congress through direct interface and indirectly through the media.

ACTIONS

AWLLC conducted a 100-day review that included an assessment of its legislative and regulatory strategies, a survey of current and former members, and discussion with key congressional stakeholders. AWLLC issued a 55-page report that:

1. Recommended a new organization be created including new branding.
2. Proposed a new organizational, governance and dues structure.
3. Outlined a new strategic advocacy plan.
4. Offered a new communication plan to support the new organization including its marketing and membership needs, and a strategic advocacy plan.

RESULTS



The coalition's Executive Committee approved the restructuring proposal and retained AWLLC to implement the report's recommendations, including naming Warner as Executive Director.

Under Warner's leadership, the coalition retained a branding firm to help develop a new brand and worked with a graphic designer/web page designer to ensure concept and strategic alignment. The adopted strategic plan provided the framework for a new governance structure, an expanded membership base, an enhanced advocacy effort on Capitol Hill and among industry stakeholders, and a re-energized presence before the Surface Transportation Board (STB).

The Freight Rail Customer Alliance (FRCA) launched in September 2015. Due in large measure to FRCA's enhanced advocacy, the U.S. Congress passed The Freight Rail Customer Alliance (FRCA) launched in September 2015. Due in large measure to FRCA's enhanced advocacy, the U.S. Congress passed:

- The first reauthorization of the STB in 20 years, the STB Reauthorization Act of 2015 (P.L. 114-110) providing long overdue needed reforms, enhanced transparency, and increased funding for the STB
- Record-level appropriations for the STB in the Consolidated Appropriation Act of 2017 (P.L. 115-31) providing \$37 million of which \$2.046 million is directed for IT upgrades.

FRCA has also become more engaged in STB proceedings and rulemakings including revenue adequacy, rate reasonableness, expediting rate cases, and commodity exemptions.

Under Warner's guidance, FRCA has been able to retain nearly all of its former members and secured new members generating additional revenue.