
CASE STUDY:

The N.C. Coalition for Customer Choice in Electricity

GENERATING SUPPORT FOR DEREGULATION

The Situation

A handful of North Carolina manufacturing facilities approached our team with a daunting request. Congress recently had empowered states to open their retail electricity markets to competition. Recognizing an opportunity to capture substantial savings on power costs, large electricity consumers such as DuPont, International Paper and Weyerhaeuser wanted deregulation put on the state legislative agenda. They asked us to create a statewide grassroots/grasstops program to build support among consumers and lawmakers for deregulation.

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The Work

We conducted a public opinion poll to gauge awareness of and sentiment toward the deregulation question among North Carolina consumers. We used the findings to formulate the strategy for building the NC4E coalition, developing grassroots support and garnering favorable media coverage. Our team developed and coordinated an integrated program comprising a statewide speaker's bureau, a member recruitment/activation program, media engagement and targeted communications to North Carolina media and legislators.

The Outcomes

In just one year, NC4E grew from 11 manufacturers to a force of more than 2,000 residential members and 50 large and small businesses, hospitals and school systems. As the recognized voice of deregulation, NC4E garnered more than one million media impressions and persuaded lawmakers to form a blue-ribbon study commission.



NC4E was awarded representation on the panel and helped build consensus among the state's investor-owned utilities, ElectriCities, electric co-ops and Utilities Commission members to recommend legislation that would open the state's retail electricity market to competition over the next decade. (Note: Unfortunately, severe brownouts in California's deregulated market and a national recession that hit shortly afterward pushed the issue to the back burner in North Carolina.)