The Other Side of the Dais:
Strategies for Social Workers Vying to Serve in Public Office

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Abstract: *This article articulates a reinvigorated vision for social workers to be elected and appointed to serve in public office and an array of strategies to achieve this vision. Coupling the current and divisive political climate with the pressing inequities of marginalized populations, an urgent imperative exists for social workers to "re-envision" and expand their macro practice options more deliberatively by serving in public office. Included in this challenge is the necessity for social workers to assume legitimated macro power by holding elected and appointed positions in government – a sub-branch of "political social work." To that end, this article articulates five components of political social work practice in elected and appointed office: 1) the roles and skills of elected and appointed officials, 2) making the decision to seek office, 3) campaigning and networking, 4) serving in office; and 5) enlisting social workers to assist others who seek public office. It concludes with recommended strategies to strengthen these components that both social work education and social work professional associations should consider.*

Keywords: *Political social work, electoral politics, elected office, appointed office*

This article articulates a reinvigorated vision for social workers to be elected and appointed to serve in public office. Coupling the current and divisive political climate with the pressing inequities of marginalized populations, an urgent imperative exists for social workers to "re-envision" and expand their macro practice options more deliberatively by serving in public office. When social workers occupy positions of power and authority on the dais, their perspectives and skillsets will bring hope and opportunity for vulnerable populations. Given a decades-long sweep of waning interest in macro practice (Friedman, et al., 2020; Reisch & Jani, 2012; Rothman, 2013), social work education sought to reverse this trend, expand macro practice curricula, and increase student interest in macro specialization by 20% by 2020 (Council on Social Work Education [CSWE], 2018). Included in this challenge is the necessity for social workers to assume legitimated macro power by holding elected and appointed positions in government – a sub-branch of "political social work" that also encompasses empowerment of social workers' clients to vote and social workers supporting pro-social work candidates holding office (Friedman et al., 2020; Lane & Humphreys, 2011; Pritzker & Lane, 2016).

Background

Since the early days of the social work profession, social workers have engaged in the policy-making process and electoral politics (Friedman et al., 2020; National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2021a; Weiss, 2017). The political engagement started with early social work pioneers. Jane Addams engaged in local organizing - often political in

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nature - around Hull House in Chicago, and Mary Richmond, who authored *Social Diagnosis* in 1917, sought to understand the root causes of poverty after seeing its consequences in individuals' plights (Social Welfare History Project, 2011). In 1916, social worker Jeanette Rankin was elected to Congress (Lane et al., 2018; Lane & Humphreys, 2011). Indeed,

> [B]eginning with Theodore Roosevelt's Progressive Party in 1912, social workers have been active in presidential campaigns, including those of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Lyndon Johnson, Bill Clinton, and Barack Obama. [National Association of Social Workers] NASW has been active in local and state elections since 1976. Social workers show a growing willingness to enter the political arena in all capacities—as voters, party officials, political professionals, candidates, and officeholders. (NASW, 2021a, p. 95)

Likewise, social workers have been appointed to federal and state cabinet positions and on the boards of directors of private non-profit and for-profit organizations. Social workers have served on such bodies for the better part of a century (Friedman et al., 2020; Weiss, 2017). Apart from co-founding Hull House in Chicago, Jane Addams was a co-founder and board member of the American Civil Liberties Union; she helped create the new Progressive Party in 1912, which supported the candidacy of Theodore Roosevelt (Hamington, 2019). President Franklin Delano Roosevelt appointed Frances Perkins as Secretary of Labor, and she remains the longest-serving Labor Secretary to date. Similarly, social worker and civil rights activist, Dr. Dorothy I. Height, was appointed in 1974 to the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research—which produced the Belmont Report (Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, & National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 2014), and served as chairperson of the Executive Committee of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights until she died in 2010 (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2019). In the 1980s and 1990s, William Waldman served under three New Jersey state administrations as Commissioner of Human Services. In 2021, Shevaun Harris was appointed as Secretary of the Department of Children and Families in Florida.

Over one hundred years since the profession's birth, the crucial role for social work advocacy with the populations left vulnerable by oppressive structures has long commanded social workers to make significant inroads by having a "seat at the table" in macro policymaking (Abramowitz, 1998; Abramowitz & Sherraden, 2016; Lane & Humphreys, 2011; Reisch & Jani, 2012). Yet, the literature suggests so much work is needed to realize social work's full potential as elected officials (Friedman et al., 2020; Pritzker & Lane, 2016). Additionally, the literature on social workers seeking appointed office is virtually silent (Lane & Humphreys, 2011; Friedman et al., 2020). Furthermore, the impression from examining the profession's chief messengers (NASW, CSWE, schools and departments of social work) is that serving in public office occurs more by happenstance than by a deliberate, strategic, and ongoing plan that the profession has forwarded.

Therefore, the vision of social workers having a "seat at the table" should be elevated to a "seat on the dais," in which the profession moves beyond *social work advocacy with* government decision-makers to *social workers as* government decision-makers. To that end, this article examines two areas of political social work practice: the landscape of social workers serving in elected office and the landscape of social workers serving in appointed office. Within each of these two areas, five components of social work are articulated: 1) the roles and skills of elected and appointed officials; 2) deciding to seek office; 3) campaigning and networking; 4) serving in office; and 5) enlisting social workers to assist others who seek public office. Finally, strategies are provided for social work education and practice – through organizations such as CSWE, schools of social work, and NASW – to reinvigorate macro social work.

The Landscape of Social Workers in Elected Office

At present, there are two United States Senators (Senators Sinema, Stabenow) and four United States Representatives (Representatives Bass, Davis, Garcia, and Lee) who are social workers (NASW, 2019). (In the past, at least one additional U.S. Senator [Senator Mikulski] and at least three U. S. Representatives (Representatives Dellums, Rankin, and Towns) have comprised this group). In addition, as of 2017, nearly 200 social workers were serving in elected positions in state and local government per NASW's Political Action for Candidate Election (PACE) committee (a current list does not appear on NASW's website;; Colby, 2018; NASW, 2021b).

Given this social work presence in the landscape of electoral politics throughout the nation, the following presents five essential components for understanding the process for social workers to hold elected office and the gaps that remain.

The Roles and Skills of Social Workers as Elected Officials

Political roles await social workers from the local to the federal government (Friedman et al., 2020; Lane & Humphreys, 2011). They can serve on town and city commissions/ councils, county commissions, and school boards at the local level. They can campaign for state representatives/delegates, state senators, and governors at the state level. At the federal level, of course, they can serve as representatives, senators, presidents, and vice presidents.

In these roles, elected social workers provide leadership of the respective government they represent. They are the "public face" of a community and are identified as a role model. They are tasked to implement the authority accorded to them by law and purview based on federalism. Federalism is the organization and separation of powers and policy oversight based on level of government; that is, elected social workers in federal office, for example, oversee immigration, defense, Medicare, and federal tax policy while those in local office, for example, oversee planning and zoning, school policy, and public safety (Robertson, 2012). Therefore, social workers in their elected positions jurisdictionally provide a degree of decision-making over a particular scope of policy issues. They

represent and resolve constituents' needs, and in local government, they often supervise the chief executive officer.

In these roles, it is incumbent for social workers to utilize their skill set to solve civic problems; fortunately, this skill set is well-suited for elected office in political social work. Social work skills, including the "person-in-environment" assessment and cultural humility, provide elected social workers with keen insight into assessing a civic problem that needs examination. Social work skills of advocacy, organizing, brokering, negotiation, education, facilitation, group work, and mediating are helpful in intervening to address a civic problem (Friedman et al., 2020; Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2018). Skills cited by elected social workers as most important in their service included (in order of use): "communication skills," "active listening," "conflict management and conflict resolution," "bargaining and compromising," and tied - "forming and maintaining coalitions," and "analytical skills" (Lane, 2011). Finally, the social work skill of ethical decision-making for assessment and intervention is critically important for elected social workers. It provides the foundation for their public leadership (NASW, 2021c).

Yet, the need for increased macro content in this area is discussed by Lane (2011) and partially underlies the CSWE's (2018) *Specialized Curricular Guide for Macro Social Work Practice*. However, there is no mention of social workers seeking elected office in this guide. The process of engaging in macro work is particularly complex and seemingly inaccessible (Pritzker & Lane, 2016). A growing body of research demonstrates that unless they are purposely encouraged by educators, students may struggle to find relevance, interest, and fortitude to learn about elected officials – and what they do – on their own (Elmaliach-Mankita et al., 2019; Lustig-Gants & Weiss-Gal, 2015).

Making the Decision to Seek Elected Office

Of course, deciding to seek elected office cannot be taken lightly. The enormity of time and funding makes this decision reflective and strategic. Social workers need to consider the time it will take away from their families and friends, the ability to coordinate both regular employment and this enterprise, the psychological stress, and any financial strain it may take. Conversely, social workers inherently know the call to service. This call toward public leadership provides the opportunity to make both sweeping and incremental policy changes, the ability to influence governments and communities, the chance to mentor new leaders, and the tremendous satisfaction of leadership itself. These are many of the considerations that social workers need to weigh when considering campaigning for public office, and the need exists for social workers and social work students' exposure to candidates and elected officials for networking and mentorship (Lane et al., 2018; Lustig-Gants & Weiss-Gal, 2015).

Campaigning and Networking

The heart of a campaign involves campaigning and networking, and social workers seeking elected office are not immune from this. While operating with a person-in-environment, these political activities are not necessarily intrinsically known to any social

worker. Campaigning is quite different from serving in elected office. Campaigning demands the establishment of priorities, fundraising, financial reporting, messaging, volunteer coordination, interviews, and continued motivation and acumen. Networking requires a savvy examination of the constituent base, influencers, supporters, and detractors in a geographic and digital milieu. As referenced by Lane and Humphreys (2011), the importance of "creat[ing] alliances with organizations, groups, and movements with similar goals" is paramount (p. 241).

Still, the need for helping social workers and social work students campaign and network for their campaign remains urgent. This very specialized macro method of political social work in social work education needs improvement (Lane, 2011; Lane et al., 2018). A notable exception is The Nancy A. Humphreys Institute for Political Social Work for social workers seeking elected office (University of Connecticut School of Social Work, 2021).

The NASW Political Action for Candidate Election (PACE) does not keep a current list of local and state elected officials, and no working database with elected officials' specific information is available (NASW, 2021b). While PACE offers significant campaign donations and some campaign guidelines (from Candidate College) for social workers seeking office, its interface with providing support and guidance to candidates seeking local and state offices could be strengthened. Specifically, PACE does not comprehensively provide non-financial campaign support to candidates, and consequently, PACE's infrastructure and assistance to candidates can be improved. More broadly, a national initiative from NASW calling for more social workers to seek office does not appear to exist.

Serving in Elected Office

Once the arduous process of the campaign is over, and a victory has been achieved, it is quickly time for the elected social worker to get to work. Serving in elected office presents an opportunity for social workers to use their social work practice modalities of crisis intervention, case management, and advocacy to address constituents' concerns and enact a policy agenda that addresses equity and social justice. Research must test the assumption that social workers are "substantially different" from other elected officeholders (Lane & Humphreys, 2011).

While in office, elected social workers will need support. While there should at least be adequate infrastructure (staff support for policy and administrative assistance), no formalized support network exists to support them. Additionally, once elected, social workers could benefit from an array of professional development through certificate programs and custom-made professional development. A deficit may exist for social workers who have not been educated in trauma-informed care or practice as social policy is increasingly influenced by trauma. Given the pandemic and the continued spate of mass shootings, service delivery for constituents impacted by such natural and human-created disasters necessitates the understanding of trauma and policy response (see Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014).

Enlisting Social Workers to Support Campaigns

Social workers' involvement may focus on helping others get elected rather than personally running for office (Friedman et al., 2020; Pritzker & Lane, 2016). As mentioned, campaigns include various strategies that could appeal to social workers. When social workers help other social workers campaign for office, this synchronicity of connection – between social workers as campaign supporters and candidates - can be lifted and magnified. Social workers' knowledge and skillsets relating to person-in-environment and strengths perspective, ethical reasoning, strategic planning, communication skills, and advocacy for marginalized populations can provide necessary campaign support.

Consequently, what is needed to spur social workers' involvement is a catalyst – a school of social work and a professional association's boost - to provide the mechanism for the candidate's social work peers to offer instrumental campaign support. This is challenging as more than 50% of social workers do not engage politically, let alone provide campaign support (Rome & Hoechstetter, 2010). Therefore, a support mechanism of social workers supporting those seeking office is required (Pritzker & Lane, 2016; Weiss, 2017).

The Landscape of Social Workers in Appointed Office

Extensive research on the numbers and levels of social workers appointed to voluntary positions on non-profit boards, councils, commissions, or in fully employed appointed positions in the U.S. did not yield any listing, database, or repository. Also, a literature review of social workers appointed to public office yielded no results.

Notwithstanding the absence of such information, it is a fact that many social workers have served and serve as volunteers on countless boards of directors, councils, commissions, and as appointed leaders of public and non-profit agencies across the country (Friedman et al., 2020; Weiss, 2017). This article provides several examples of social workers who have served in such capacities, including some who currently occupy statewide, governor-appointed cabinet positions. We propose at least three types of social workers who may seek appointed office as an end goal or utilize appointed office as a training ground (i.e., minor leagues) for elected office. These include: 1) social workers serving as volunteers in boards, commissions, and councils, and who are not interested in seeking higher appointment or elected office; 2) social workers who intentionally seek to improve their skills in these minor leagues to seek a higher appointment (paid or unpaid); and 3) social workers in these minor leagues who have served or are currently serving on boards, commissions, councils or are employed as appointed officers and strategically plan to transition to elected office.

Again, the five components for understanding the context of social workers seeking appointed office and identifying existing barriers are examined.

Roles and Skills as Directors, Administrators, Managers, and High-Level Officers

Social workers have served in multiple policymaking roles on policy decision boards, elected offices, and organizational bodies (Lane & Humphreys, 2011). The range of roles

includes volunteer boards of directors of small non-profits and cabinet-level positions at the federal, state, county, and municipal levels (Friedman et al., 2020; Lane & Humphreys, 2011; Weiss, 2017). These roles also vary - from volunteer-board secretaries, treasurers, vice-presidents, presidents, and chairpersons - to appointments as directors, managers, administrators, or commissioners and secretaries of cities and federal agencies, in charge of billionaire-dollar budgets and thousands of personnel or staff. With the latter's higher appointments, social workers are appointed as paid staff accountable to the elected officeholders who appoint them. As referenced, the profession includes the names of social work luminaries, who have served as directors, managers, administrators, commissioners, and cabinet secretaries (e.g., Jane Addams, Francis Perkins, and Dr. Dorothy Height). Others have directed and currently run federal, state, and municipal agencies or serve on the board of directors of large and small organizations. Their numbers keep growing as they continue to be appointed to these roles by presidents, state governors, county and city mayors, commissioners, and councilmembers.

Social workers gain valuable skills when charged to lead programs, projects, agency departments, or entire agencies and organizations in these multiple roles. Among these skills are policymaking skills (e.g., creating organizational policies and procedures), administrative skills (e.g., how to develop and administer program budgets), and management skills (e.g., how to supervise staff and manage day-to-day program operations; Feldman, 2020; Nouman et al., 2020). In particular, Feldman (2020) discusses resource-based policy practice. Resource-based policy practice is reminiscent of the profession's historical roots when community organizers skillfully created formal, professional community-based organizations (with bylaws, elected boards, mass memberships (Feldman, 2020; Nouman et al., 2020). These skills are easily transferable to positions of higher, appointed – and elected – office (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2018).

However, while political social work education, when practiced, educates students to transfer social work skills to elected office, the same is not often recognized for service in appointed offices. Social workers' prior volunteer experiences are less recognized as stepping-stones for higher appointed offices where their budgetary and policy experiences can have an even broader impact. Further, while it is widely recognized that social workers' prior volunteer activity serves as a training ground for higher-level policy work, the connection is not often made with future elected roles. Even seminal social work texts such as Kirst-Ashman and Hull's (2018) *Generalist Practice with Organizations and Communities* neglect to direct social workers to transfer their skills in service as board members and other appointed officers. As argued earlier in this paper, the profession's gradual move away from community practice has conversely resulted in a reduction in macro/policy practice skills.

Deciding to Seek Appointed Office

As evidenced by the relatively small numbers who served as cabinet secretaries at the state or federal levels, few social workers seek higher appointed offices. It is seldom the case that a social worker intentionally plans to use their volunteer board experience as a path to such higher appointments. Most social workers begin by serving on small boards

as directors - often in small, community-based organization - and progressively work their way up the management and administrative ladder in their chosen professional realm to the point of being noticed by an elected officeholder, who may, in turn, appoint them to the higher role.

However, absent deliberate social work education or professional guidance, the realization that the path to a higher appointed office (e.g., state secretary of human services or child welfare services) may start with a volunteer board may never enter a social worker's mind. Planning to climb a ladder of power or influence may appear self-serving and may not appeal to many social workers. Consequently, planning and strategizing how to seek and secure higher-office appointments are not typically part of a social worker's education, theoretical conceptualization, training, or thought processes (Feldman, 2020). Thus, the process of social workers' consideration of appointed office is frequently more the product of luck than a planned strategy to grow and serve in positions of higher power and influence.

Networking

Network development is a transferable skill that social workers often utilize in mezzo and macro practice (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2018). Social workers build extensive networks by employing their roles as enabler, mediator, analyst, broker, and advocate (Friedman et al., 2020; Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2018). These networks provide platforms for social workers to explore and secure appointments for public office. Many social workers, including this article's authors, were recruited, encouraged, or volunteered through colleagues (via professional networks) to serve on boards of directors or seek a position as an NASW board officer.

Yet, these conversations also occur more by chance. While there are limited resources for social workers interested in running for elected offices (e.g., the Campaign School and PACE), no resources exist for social workers who may want to seek appointments to public or private entities. No such efforts, programs initiatives, support systems, or NASW-sponsored projects (NASW) can be found for social workers interested in appointed rather than an elected office. This absence is striking considering that social work education develops skills commonly used in administration, management, and politics (Lustig-Gants & Weiss-Gal, 2015). This divergence also creates a relative vacuum of experienced social workers ready to move from appointed to elected office. Therefore, the need exists to promote a networking infrastructure to support social work students and social work professionals seeking public office as volunteers or professional administrators and managers.

Social Workers Serving in Appointed Public Office

Once social workers are appointed to a board, commission, or other entity, they bring the roles and skills to the dais, as previously discussed. Often, appointed officers serve at the discretion of the elected officials (e.g., presidents, governors, mayors, legislative bodies) in the capacities of policy and programmatic advisors from their seats on councils,

commissions, or task forces (Weiss, 2017; Weiss-Gal et al., 2017). In some cases, these roles include policy and programmatic decisions that require large budgetary allocations or reallocations. Likewise, appointed office holders — employed in the public sector as agency directors, commissioners, secretaries, or assistant secretaries — have power and influence over social welfare policy, programs, and budgets ranging in the thousands to millions of dollars. In all cases, these appointed officials must develop expertise in areas essential to the competent exercise of their duties, including budget and staff management, programmatic administration, and policy and procedure development and implementation. Working with other, more experienced social work professionals is critical to success for social workers serving in these capacities. Still, this infrastructure of education and support currently does not exist. As discussed, a repository of experienced, appointed social workers that could provide such peer support is much needed. Further, educational opportunities focused on social workers' effectiveness in appointed offices are not available.

Enlisting Social Workers to Assist Others who Seek Public Office

Social workers interested in an appointment to a policymaking body or a higher administrative or leadership position need a cohesive network of supportive and experienced professionals (social workers and non-social workers) for their successful appointment. For the social workers in their network, the potential appointee would rely on their knowledge and skillsets relating to person-in-environment and strengths assessment, ethical reasoning, strategic planning, budgeting, administrative supervision, communication skills, and advocacy for marginalized populations. These needs and potential skills gaps in certain areas (e.g., budgeting, organizational leadership) result in an unmet "demand" that warrants further attention.

Strategies to Improve Infrastructure for Social Workers and Social Work Students Seeking Elected and Appointed Office

Based on the above discussion, both social work education (schools/departments of social work/ CSWE) and the NASW should employ the following strategies to increase the profession's "infrastructure" regarding providing support for social work students and social workers seeking elected and appointed public office. Table 1 provides strategies to improve this infrastructure.

Table 1. *Strategies to Help Social Workers Succeed in Elected and Appointed Office*

Component	Social Work Education Strategy	NASW Practice Strategy
The roles & skills of elected & appointed officials	1. Increase content on this topic in introduction, policy, and macro practice courses at the BSW & MSW levels. 2. Add content on seeking elected & appointed office to CSWE's Educational & Policy Accreditation Standards & *Specialized Curricular Guide for Macro Social Work Practice*. (Pritzker & Burwell, 2016). 3. Inform students of the importance of participating in leadership development programs.	1. Increase NASW professional development on this topic. 2. Mobilize social workers – beyond social work students – to participate in annual legislative advocacy ("lobby") days. 3. Create a training series for social workers in the skills needed to serve on volunteer boards or in appointed & elected offices. 4. Inform members & professionals on the importance of participating in leadership development programs & training.
Deciding to seek office	1. Invite current or past elected or appointed officials (ideally a social worker) who share their stories of what motivated them to seek office. 2. Create assignments on exploring a potential candidacy on which the students may wish to embark.	1. Invite local candidates to speak at annual awards or special events tied to legislative advocacy, such as an "elected official" of the forums. 2. Create a mentoring network for potential candidates & appointees to link with elected & appointed social workers.
Campaigning & networking	1. Develop a "mock" campaign through the student social work association to understand the need & "how-to" of organizing a campaign. 2. Create an elected official series in which local politicians come & speak to provide information & insight on how to run a campaign.	1. Strengthen PACE's infrastructure by including campaign support & guidance with local & state social work candidates. 2. Create a national database of current & former elected & appointed social workers. 3. Develop a parallel "PACE" entity for social workers seeking appointed office. 4. Establish a feedback loop between national PACE & the PACE state chapter offices to coordinate the initiative.
Serving in public office	1. Provide existing or custom-made certificates (for a fee) to elected social workers on trauma-informed policy, financial management, & administrative supervision. 2. Supervise social work interns in macro field placement. 3. Link social work faculty & students with relevant research or identified best practices with appointed officials in related areas.	1. Develop a support "mutual aid" network for elected social workers. 2. Provide education on elected & appointed officials' roles during tenure in office. 3. Create ongoing & streamlined policy briefs for elected social workers. 4. Hire social work staff in elected & appointed social worker's offices. 5. Draw on a new database to identify & match professionals with expertise in specific areas with appointed officials working in those areas.
Enlisting social workers to assist others who seek public office through elected & appointed service	1. Present Campaign 101 in macro classes & articulate specific positions that social workers can fill. 2. Invite a current or past appointed official (ideally a social worker) who can share their story of involvement.	1. Link with peers at professional venues & workplaces (note Hatch Act) to introduce the campaign & attain support. 2. Draw on a new database & mentoring network to enlist other social workers to assist those seeking elected & appointed office.

The Roles and Skills of Social Workers as Elected and Appointed Officials

Schools of social work should develop a more focused strategy on educating students on this macro practice method in introduction, policy, and macro practice courses at both the BSW and MSW levels. Providing students with information on both the available roles of elected officials and the skills used can make seeking elected and appointed offices accessible (Lane, 2011; Nouman et al., 2020; Pritzker & Burwell, 2016; Pritzker & Lane, 2018). The skillsets developed in mezzo and macro content (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2018) are transferable to social workers seeking elected and appointed office. As social workers learn group and community needs assessment, consensus building, and problem-solving, instructors can teach social work students how these skills are transferable across this continuum of service. This can be required through the inclusion of "electoral activity" in the CSWE Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (Pritzker & Burwell, 2016). Additionally, the CSWE's (2018) *Specialized Curricular Guide for Macro Social Work Practice* should include a discussion and "roadmap" to seeking elected and appointed office.

Professional associations should include strategic planning to educate social workers on pathways toward elected and appointed office. Leadership development begins with education. Therefore, professional development on this topic can also be regularly scheduled through NASW and other professional venues. Making increased efforts to include social workers and social work students at NASW's signature lobbying and legislative days across the nation is an excellent place to begin. This provides firsthand experience to meet with legislators. NASW should also reference electoral politics in the Code of Ethics (NASWc, 2021; Rome & Hoechstetter, 2010).

External to professional associations (i.e., NASW), two other leadership development avenues are available to social work students and social workers – government training academies and non-profit designed programs. While explained next in more detail, NASW could create leadership training programs for social workers addressing the skills needed to serve on volunteer boards and as appointed or elected officials.

In some political jurisdictions, local governments have instituted "government training academies" that help educate taxpayers and constituents on how government operates from an insider's view. While the primary goal of these academies is to provide citizen education, an implicit goal is to cultivate a cadre of volunteers who may serve on advisory boards and make government more open, more participatory, and more efficient. Undoubtedly, some government training academy graduates who serve in an advisory capacity in appointed offices may see it as preparation to transition to seeking elected office.

In the non-profit sector, foundations and some grant-seeking non-profit organizations have played a critical but lonesome role in recruiting younger volunteers to serve in leadership development programs and auxiliary or junior boards. For instance, community foundations have created and funded leadership programs for the communities or localities they serve. Examples include The Miami Foundation's Miami Leaders, Leadership Greater Chicago, and the Kellogg Foundation's Community Leadership network with the Center

for Creative Leadership. Others, like the Ford Foundation, have funded leadership development programs in response to demands by disenfranchised communities (e.g., women and communities of color/BIPOC). In the 1980s, Ford endowed the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) to develop leadership development programs for Latinos in multiple cities across the U.S.

These leadership development avenues have expanded the pools of those in the minor leagues interested in serving on boards, councils, commissions, seeking higher appointments, or running for elected office. NASW and schools of social work need to inform their constituencies of the significant importance of participating in these programs.

Making the Decision to Seek Office

To inspire students to run for elected and appointed office takes educators who are inspired themselves. This is how recruitment of social workers for public office can occur (Lane & Humphreys, 2011; Pritzker & Lane, 2016). As a strategy, educators can invite a current or past elected official (ideally a social worker) who can share their story of what motivated them to run and why they thought they were the right candidate for the right position at the right time. This education further demystifies the process, which may be the most significant barrier to running at all. When students meet elected officials, they see the candidate as a "real person" who is invested in their community, highly motivated, organized, and cares about their constituents' needs. These meetings with actual elected officials can be compelling and inspire others to run. Additionally, inviting social workers in appointed office to speak in a classroom is an important strategy to provide students with another path to serve in public office.

Social work educators can create assignments that explore the link between a potential candidacy or potential appointment and particular social justice issues (e.g., affordable housing; living wage). Students can explore how serving in office provides the power or authority to "right" some wrong; that is, they want social justice in which resources are redistributed in society to provide more access and equity to marginalized groups (Hoefer, 2019; Lane, Ostrander, & Smith, 2018). This assignment provides for students to brainstorm on a potential elected position and a potential appointment with an accompanying rationale to run.

Similarly, through professional development, NASW local chapters and units can invite local candidates to speak at annual awards or special events tied to legislative advocacy. Chapters and units typically designate an "Elected Official" of the year, and these forums provide additional opportunities for social workers to "access" elected officials. If known social workers are locally elected officials, the familiarity of both a shared profession and a local community may serve as inspiration (Pritzker & Lane, 2016). NASW Chapters should create databases that track high-ranking government officials with social work degrees.

Campaigning and Networking

An explicit curriculum could focus on the structure and mechanisms of a campaign that students participate in a policy practice group assignment in the classroom. For implicit curricula, a "mock" campaign might be created through the student social work association to understand the needs and "how-to" of organizing a campaign concerning team creation, agenda-setting, marketing, fundraising, public speaking, constituent outreach, and messaging. Further, implicit curricula could include an elected official series where local politicians come and speak (ideally but not necessarily social workers) to provide information and insight into running a campaign (Pritzker & Lane, 2017).

PACE's infrastructure should be revamped and strengthened to fully support social work candidates – particularly at the state and local level (NASW, 2021b). Specifically, providing a more hands-on approach to guiding social workers who are candidates for office would greatly assist in all aspects of campaigning (e.g., setting up a campaign, assembling a team, volunteer coordination, establishing campaign priorities, marketing, fundraising). Creating a feedback loop from national PACE and the PACE state chapter offices would coordinate this initiative. Establishing a database of verified current and former elected social workers for networking purposes would prove of great value. These strategies, in turn, would increase social work presence in public office and, by extension, further social work's agenda through priorities, policies, and ethics. NASW should also consider creating a "parallel" PACE for appointed social workers that provides a database, education, and support for those seeking appointed office.

Further, just as social workers must campaign for elected office, they should intentionally seek appointments to public and private governing bodies (boards, commissions, councils, advisory bodies) by developing strategic campaigns to reach their goals. Whether it is by volunteering and serving on the board of a small community agency or by moving on to larger and better-resourced organizations requires planning and implementing a networking effort that is intentional and strategic (Lane & Humphreys, 2011). Regrettably, few social workers consider the need to use such volunteer activities as a series of stepping-stones to move on to larger, more influential, or more powerful appointed positions. This is notwithstanding the profession's ethos of commitment to improving society by addressing significant social problems while upholding the worth and dignity of all individuals. Which merits the question: who better serves in appointed or elected office than a social worker?

Serving in Public Office

Schools of social work should develop partnerships with elected and appointed social workers and provide (for a fee) an array of trauma-informed certificate programs for professionals who may need them. Additional certificate programs might include financial management and administrative supervision. It is important to note this training could already be developed or may need to be custom-made and in partnership with disciplines such as public administration, healthcare, and business.

In turn, social workers can serve as field educators in this macro field placement (Friedman et al., 2020; Pritzker & Lane, 2018). Moreover, social workers can serve as speakers and mentors to students interested in macro practice in general, assisting with campaigns, considering a run for office themselves, or discussing the rationale for serving or seeking to serve on boards of directors or appointed office.

As the largest professional association, NASW should create a network to provide substantive and reliable assistance to both elected and appointed officials; in essence, this can create a "mutual aid" system among social workers who are elected officials. Specifically, NASW could provide education and support groups to appointed and elected officials.

As there are different tiers of service (city, county, state, federal), the national office of NASW could provide such groups geared to varying levels of office. Topics such as adapting to a public service role as an elected or appointed official, addressing constituents' needs, working with staff, crisis management in social service delivery settings, and decision-making in times of stress could be the focus of such groups. Additionally, NASW could create an office, or at least an extension of its policy division, from which it issues up-to-the-minute policy briefs (e.g., affordable housing, diversity, equity, and inclusion, sea-level rise) for elected social workers' review. These policy briefs could even be tailored to a particular officials' jurisdiction; coordination of this strategy could be examined and negotiated individually. This would be in keeping with NASW's ethical obligation to political action (Friedman et al., 2020; NASW, 2021c).

The elected and appointed social workers can hire social workers to staff the official's office by "giving back" to the profession. Depending on the level of office, need for staffing, and office funds available, the elected or appointed officeholder can offer paid internships or employ social workers in a variety of positions such as chief of staff, legislative director, constituents' affairs director, legislative aide, policy analyst, or research assistant (Pritzker & Lane, 2018). These positions match the knowledge and skillsets of macro-focused social workers.

Enlisting Social Workers to Assist Others who Seek Public Office

Social work education plays a role by presenting the "what" and "how" of campaigning, and this education can start in macro practice classes in schools of social work. As mentioned earlier, successful campaigns necessitate a dizzying array of components; a course devoted to macro practice can introduce and review a campaign's foundation, so students appreciate campaigns and how to best participate. A student may find that their social media savvy can provide vital technical support in campaign website and social media presence. Or a student could determine that canvassing for votes via the tried-but-true method of knocking on doors and introducing the candidate's message is a preferred involvement strategy. This course would introduce students to the campaign process and help demystify working on a campaign. Providing this content on electoral activity is essential to build social workers' interest and capacity in political social work (Pritzker & Burwell, 2016).

Social workers also serve as an essential resource for campaign support. Connecting with social workers at local levels, including NASW local units and colleagues, is an important place to start (Lane & Humphreys, 2011). Colleagues at the candidate's workplace can assist on campaigns but need to do so as private citizens and outside of work hours per the federal statute called the Hatch Act [U.S. Office of Special Counsel, 2021]. Such engagement with potential campaign members provides the necessary introductions and relationship building for candidates to complete their campaign staff and volunteers. For example, all campaigns require a treasurer, and a fellow social worker can undoubtedly fill this position. Campaign manager, chief strategist, and volunteer coordinator are some of the positions that many campaigns have. These positions are well-matched by social workers' education who precisely understand the campaign's policy agenda and priorities. Interested social workers may not have had political social work exposure in their education. The candidate and campaign team can orient and supervise social work students joining the campaign team.

Though the need for assistance from social work students and professionals is more significant for those seeking elected office, office-seekers need help in two specific areas. First, NASW could identify social workers who are experts in specific areas (for instance, mental health services or services to the homeless) and match them with appointed officials in local, state, or national boards, councils, commissions, or task forces in need of information from a social work perspective. This is not a new premise as social workers already assist policymakers in different capacities (Weiss, 2017; Weiss-Gal et al., 2017). Likewise, NASW and social work schools should help identify research areas and best practices that could be helpful to appointed officials as they discharge their duties. This "important role of social workers serving in staff positions for candidates and elected officials requires more attention" (Lane & Humphreys, 2011, p. 240).

Conclusion

It is time the profession strategically plans to educate and train the future Dorothy I. Heights, Jane Addams, and Frances Perkins of our times. No doubt that some of them could consider becoming the next U.S. Senators Sinema and Stabenow, or Congresswomen Bass, Davis, Garcia, and Lee of their generation.

As we look to re-envision and reinvigorate the social work profession, solidifying the profession's stature and reach is paramount. This article presents a roadmap for cultivating the macro practice method of political social work and electoral politics. It introduces the macro practice method of seeking appointed office. Strengthening the necessary infrastructure that supports these methods holds great promise to increase the profession's prominence. This re-envisioning can occur with a more focused, national emphasis on identifying and engaging social work students and professional social workers to seek and occupy elected and appointed office.

More social workers should be in public office – making policy decisions as elected and appointed office holders – so they can protect and empower marginalized clients and communities. With careful forethought, direction, and momentum, social workers can occupy these positions of power as more of them move to the other side of the dais.

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