

**Geology and Public Policy—What? Why? How? Local, State, and Regional Efforts**, John D. Kiefer, Kentucky Geological Survey, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY 40506, kiefer@uky.edu

Geology and public policy is becoming one of those overused catch phrases. Perhaps the question should not be what and why, but why has it taken so long. The answer points right back to the geologists. Approximately 30 states now have geology registration laws on the books, meaning that, by statute, we are part of public policy. Geology, or the broader earth science, plays a fundamental role in many of our public policy decisions. Unfortunately, we have not done a good job of informing the public. We know how important geology is, but we continue to whine and “preach to the choir” that people should be using geology in making decisions in the public interest. We do little to explain to others just why it is important. To quote Thomas Jefferson, “Science (geology) is my passion, politics is my duty.” Is it our duty also? We tend to hide behind worn-out excuses such as: I have no time; I’m a scientist, not a politician; most decisions are political anyway, not scientific; decisions are made behind the scenes, ignoring any outside input anyway. What is really meant by geology in public policy? How can you get involved? What are the consequences of not getting involved? Are we ever successful? How about locating energy resources, siting landfills, dealing with groundwater contamination, ensuring adequate water supplies, mitigating flooding, landslide, and earthquake damage, finding sources of sand, gravel, and limestone aggregate? Make no mistake about it, geology is critical to our survival on this planet, and making that known is critical to the survival of our profession.