What is Advocacy?

Supporting an issue or a cause that is important to you

- Talking to people in a community
- Attending/speaking at public meetings
- Contacting elected officials
- Donating, fundraising or canvassing to support a cause
Who is an advocate?


ad·vo·cate

One who publicly expresses support for a particular cause or policy and takes clear actions to advance a goal or outcome.
What do advocates do?

- **Raise Awareness**
  - Educate the public
  - Educate legislators

- **Organize**
  - Build community relationships
  - Mobilize others

- **Create Change**
  - Take actions/vote to advance an outcome
Why is advocacy important?

- Brings awareness to a problem and offers clear solutions
- Public officials are more likely to act when they hear from constituents who care about an issue
- Circles of power
- Better citizen advocacy = better policy decisions
Elected officials need to know...

- What specific action(s) do you want your elected official to take?
- Why do you want them to take it?
- What are the current and/or potential local impacts?
- What is your expertise or personal connection to the issue or policy?
If your Member/Senator has not already arrived at a firm decision on an issue, how much influence might the following advocacy strategies directed to the *Washington office* have on his/her decision?

- **In-Person Issue Visits from Constituents**: 94%
- **Contact from Constituents' Reps**: 94%
- **Individualized Email Messages**: 92%
- **Individualized Postal Letters**: 88%
- **Local Editorial Referencing Issue Pending**: 87%
- **Comments During Telephone Town Hall**: 87%
- **Phone Calls**: 84%
- **Letter to the Editor Referencing Your Boss**: 84%
- **Visit From a Lobbyist**: 83%
- **Form Email Messages**: 56%

Source: Congressional Management Foundation
Remember...

- Your elected officials represent YOU
- Connecting is easy
- It’s effective
- Like any relationship, trust is built over time
How to engage

- Call, visit or write your legislator
- Attend or organize a lobby day, town hall or other events
- Collect petition signatures/postcards
- Write your elected official(s)
- Write your local newspaper
- Vote!!!
Petitions & postcards

- Movement building
- Size (or numbers) matters!
- Include names, addresses (and phone numbers)
- Timing is everything
Letters & emails

- Identify problem and solution in concise, respectful manner
- Identify yourself as a constituent
- List relevant affiliations/credentials
- Explain local/personal impact
- Note if you want a response
- Sign with full name and address
Letters to the editor & Op-eds

- Highly visible
- Raise awareness, bring energy to a cause, and/or motivate action
- Timely topic with local relevance
- Simple language and clear call to action, do not assume readers are familiar with the issue
- Adhere to paper’s guidelines (LTEs approx. 250 words, op-eds 850)
Questions?

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