

Successful Public Policy Advocacy

Advocacy is a deliberate, strategic effort designed to bring about change in society. Change may be natural, but no change is inevitable. Nor does it happen without a great deal of work.

Advocacy involves identifying, embracing and promoting a cause. Advocacy often involves changing power relationships in society. Successful advocacy efforts engage all major sectors to ensure that the changes happen with everyone's input and knowledge.

Your members require a political and economic environment conducive to the successful operation of their business activities. They need sensible policies, stability in policies, reasonable policy implementation through regulations and effective administration.

An effective advocacy program has tremendous value to members:

- Enabling the association to be part of the policy – making process – to have a voice in the formulation of policies affecting the association members.
- Enabling the association to be “in the loop” – to become aware of policy changes before they become law or regulations.
- Enabling the association to be pro-active as well as effectively reactive.
- Enabling the association to promote democracy, the free market economy, the role of law and other fundamental issues that will create a political and economic environment favorable to the prosperity of the nation in general and to the association members in particular.

Most associations believe that improving the regulatory and legislative environment for their sector is a fundamental task. Without an institutional approach to advocacy, associations may discover their “advocacy” involves one-time lobbying or combating emergencies rather than working for advancement of their industry or sector as a whole. Instead, an association should create a systematic approach. The first step in the advocacy campaign process is to form a standing committee of the association charged with the advocacy function.

The advocacy committee;

- Sets priorities and creates an advocacy plan
- Educate the members before needing them
- Mobilize the members
- Design an emergency action plan

Good guidelines are a key component in the association's advocacy work. The guidelines should set standards regarding when, where, and how the association will pursue policy reform.

The Advocacy Cycle:

1. Identify the problem: It is a critical first step. Is the correct problem/advocacy issue to focus on chosen? What do the members think?
2. Research the causes and effects: Good research is objective, accurate and gives insight into the views of all the groups impacted by the problem.
3. Plan the essential strategy and tactics: An advocacy plan should include;
 - Objective
 - Target
 - Indicators
 - Activities
 - Time Line
4. ACT: An advocacy campaign uses many tools to accomplish its goals. Any group wishing to change laws, regulations, or policy will eventually "lobby".
5. Evaluate efforts: Successful advocacy campaigns evaluate their efforts on a regular basis.

What is Lobbying?

Lobbying is the process of influencing policy makers. Successful lobbying requires an understanding of the formal and informal processes that guide any public institution as well as knowledge about the individuals who serve in them.

Practical Tips for Lobbying:

- Establish an agenda and goals. Be prepared in writing.
- Listen.
- Be prepared, but don't feel that you need to be an expert.
- Don't stay too long.
- Remember you are there to build a relationship.
- Follow-up is as important as the meeting.