Informed, Proactive Advocacy:
Why it matters

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Welcome

"Politics is not an end, but a means. It is not a product, but a process. It is the art of government. Like other values it has its counterfeits. So much emphasis has been placed upon the false that the significance of the true has been obscured and politics has come to convey the meaning of crafty and cunning selfishness, instead of candid and sincere service."
---- Calvin Coolidge, 30th President of the United States

"It has been said that politics is the second oldest profession. I have learned that it bears a striking resemblance to the first."
— Ronald Reagan, 40th President of the United States

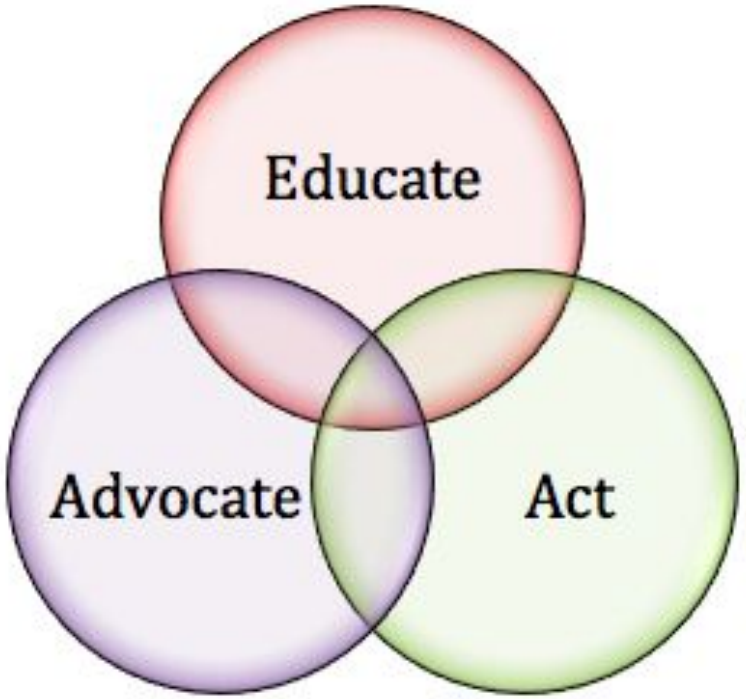
Overview

- Establish a common definition of advocacy.
- Understand the importance of state-level advocacy and lobbying.
- Discuss the current political context.
- We'll discuss thoughts on how to navigate the legislative process.
- Reflect on key takeaways and address questions.

Defining Advocacy

- Advocacy means persuading people who matter to care about your issue.
- It's a right enshrined in our Constitution:

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."



Why Advocate/Lobby?

- Reasons for advocacy and direct lobbying are many and varied:
  - To gain better laws
  - To protect favorable laws
  - To repeal unfavorable laws
  - To stop unfavorable proposals (bills) from becoming law
  - To impact state executive agency decision making
- It is important for groups that have education experience to provide information and resources to policy makers
  - Otherwise, someone else will fill the vacuum

Things That Influence Lawmakers

Getting Elected

Political Parties

Campaign Contributions

Other Lawmakers

Getting the Majority

Social Media

Scholars and Researchers

Their Own Life Experiences

Keeping the Majority

Legislative Staff

Institutional Support *(Legislative Service Agency, Auditors, etc)*

Getting Re-Elected

Community-based Advocates
(Constituents)

- Statistics from school districts
- Real-life Examples
- Issue Expertise
- Access to district voters
- Local News Media Opportunities

News Media

State Government Roles

- Educate
- Medicate
- Incarcerate

All supported through the budget appropriations process

Who Do We Target with Advocacy/Lobbying?

- Office of the Governor
- Executive Agencies
- Legislators
- Legislative Staff
- Special Interest Groups
- Media
- The Public

Context Matters

Examples:

- Term Limited Legislators
- Unrest and Negative Public Perceptions about Public Education
- Expansion of School Choice
- Nationwide Political Divisiveness
- Gerrymandered Legislative Districts

Relationship Building

- Legislators are people, too! They don't always know what they don't know.
- Individual educators can and should meet with their own legislators to let them know there are experts available when an education issue arises.
- ***The most important time to meet with lawmakers and establish relationships is when you don't need anything.***
- Sharing stories, experiences, and data relevant to your cause can make legislators more receptive to your message.

Research & Data

- Demonstrating the potential benefits of your legislative request and its alignment with the legislators' constituents' needs can be persuasive.
- Reliable information can counter opposing arguments and make your case more compelling.
  - To that end, be sure you know and understand the opposition.
- ***Self-reported data, particularly at the programmatic level, can be compelling;***
- ***Whenever possible use publicly available state-level data for comparative purposes to demonstrate overall impact or need***.

Things You Can Ask a Lawmaker to Do to Help Advance Your Issue(s)

- Introduce legislation;
- Cosponsor legislation that has already been introduced;
- Vote for a specific piece of legislation;
- Vote against a specific piece of legislation;
- Introduce, support, or oppose an amendment to a specific piece of legislation;
- Visit your school district (or affiliated groups and organizations) to get a deeper understanding of your issues and to demonstrate support for your issues.

Strategic Communication

- Presenting solutions that address specific concerns can make your request more appealing.
- Utilizing various communication channels, such as emails, phone calls, social media, and in-person meetings, can maximize your impact.
- ***Developing talking points inside of a broader advocacy campaign and sharing those with those within your organization or coalition can help support a clear, consistent and unified voice.***
  - ***This is one place where your professional organizations can help.***
- ***Stay on Message!***

Advocacy Tactics

- Constituents & Key Contacts
- Public Testimony
- Letters/Emails
- Phone Calls
- Media
- Coalition Building
- Briefings

Advocacy Tactics *(Cont.)*

- **Other Ideas**
  - Legislative Breakfasts
  - Community Forums
  - Program Visits
  - Social Media Strategy
  - Student-led or created content (videos, publications, etc.)

Legislative Information

- https://www.legislature.ohio.gov General Assembly Website
- https://www.lsc.ohio.gov Legislative Service Commission
- https://www.ohiochannel.org The Ohio Channel

Advocacy Dos and Don'ts

- Build relationships when you don't need them.
- Do your homework ~ know your issue.
  - Know your opponent's issue
- Have a narrow focus when meeting with a legislator.
  - Use stories.
- Appeal to their self interest.
- Stay on message.
- Follow up after a meeting.
- Be persistent.

Advocacy Dos and Don'ts

- Don't overload an advocacy visit with too many issues.
- Don't overstate your case; members are very busy and you're apt to lose their attention.
- Don't be argumentative; speak calmly to avoid putting the lawmaker on the defensive.
- Don't make promises you can't keep.
- Don't be afraid to take a stand in a professional way.
- Don't be offended if you need to meet with a staff member rather than the legislator.
  - *Do build a relationship with staff ~ they are the gatekeeper.*

Questions???

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