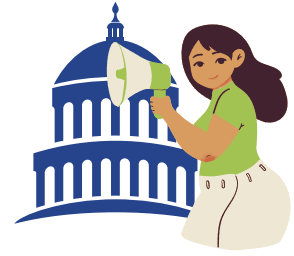


# Six Keys for Effective Advocacy

Advocacy is a process that builds public support for an issue, proposal, or policy. It allows us to express our views, promote change, and protect our rights. Advocacy takes time since it requires communicating with many people including community members and policymakers and their staff. Use these six keys to get started.

## 1 Research the Issues

Investigate the issues, both historically and today, to build a strong foundation for your advocacy work. Learn from your network and your affiliation with professional associations that regularly update members on legislative or policy matters.



## 2 Identify the Policymaker

Obtain information about legislation, committees, agencies and /or organizations you seek to educate about your issue. Congress.gov, along with Senate.gov and House.gov, are great sources of information on federal lawmakers. Websites like OpenStates.org or general Google searches can help identify state and local decision makers.

## 3 Ask for a Meeting

Contact the office of the policymaker or agency through their preferred channels. Be flexible and patient with staffers working to accommodate your request. Be ready to provide contact information and some background on your issue to facilitate planning with that office. Be persistent, but civil. Let them know if you are in their district!

## 4 Prepare the Talking Points

Prior to the meeting, prepare 1) 2-5 easily-recalled phrases representing your ideas, 2) data, examples, and compelling stories that convey the impact, urgency and need behind your cause, and 3) your "ask," such as a request to attend a gathering or a follow-up meeting. Make the message concise and memorable since advocacy meetings tend to be only 20-30 minutes long. Practice communicating your message effectively.

## 5 Share Data and Stories

Introduce yourself at the beginning of the meeting and offer your business card, complete with contact information. Then, share your talking points and stories with the policymaker or staffers. Be brief, but understandable for a non-specialist audience. Leave behind a short, written summary that provides additional insights about your issue.

## 6 Express Gratitude

Thank-yous are part of advocacy so do not skip this step! Sincere thank-yous at the conclusion of the meeting, and in a follow-up email (where you can attach digital information on your issue), support an ongoing, advocacy conversation.

### Tips

Each encounter with a policymaker or staffer can help you sharpen your message.

Remember the "everyday" kind of advocacy which can be done through social media, blogging, op-eds, and community gatherings.