**Tips to Advocate for Legislation**

* Advocacy is most effective when there is a consistent, concerted effort on the part of many to communicate a **singular message**.
* Take advantage of free media outlets to spread your message. Writing letters to the editor to your local newspaper, posting on social media while tagging reporters, and requesting that television stations cover lobby days or group events are great tools to reach a larger audience and advance your agenda.
* Remember that legislators deal with many issues at once, so they rely on their staff to stay informed. It is important to develop and maintain ongoing relationships with staff to keep them up to date on your issues and to rely on you as experts and resources.
* Whether communicating with politicians face-to-face, via phone, or via email, be persistent and professional. Keep the following guidelines in mind:
  + **Contact your Representatives and Senators:** Even if your Representatives and Senators are good advocates, it does no good to contact politicians for whom you have no opportunity to vote. Encourage friends and family in other districts to contact their legislators as well.
  + **Make appointments with key staff:** It can often be hard to get the ear of your legislator, but listening to constituents and reporting back to legislators is delegated to key staff members. Take the time to get to know your legislators’ staff.
  + **Be concise:** Members of the Legislature have many responsibilities, including legislative policy issues, constituent services, public and private obligations, and campaigning. You are more likely to have your message heard if you are brief and make your story personal.
  + **Focus on only one issue in each communication:** Do not push a laundry list of issues you want to see changed. A single pointed communication about a relevant piece of legislation is most effective.
  + **Ask for something specific:** Have in mind an action item that is realistic.
  + **Be sure to say thank you:** After a meeting, or when a vote goes your way, be sure to recognize your representatives and publicly praise their responsiveness to the community. A hand written thank you note to your legislator and their staff is always appropriate.
  + **Keep copies of emails, letters, and notes for future reference:** It helps to be able to reference specific quotes and points whenever the issue comes around again in future legislation.
  + **Follow-up and stay in touch:** Developing an ongoing relationship requires persistence. It takes time, so don’t expect one phone call, email, or op-ed to be enough. Follow up, follow up, and follow up!