



STATE LEGISLATIVE

ADVOCACY WEEK

GUIDE FOR STATE CONFERENCES ON FACILITATING A WEEK OF ACTION

A Week of Action, particularly a State Lobby Week, is a powerful tool for advocacy and change. It's a designated period when our state conferences meet with state legislators to advocate for policies that align with our collective mission. This guide provides a structured approach for state units to organize an effective lobby effort.

PRE-EVENT PLANNING

1. Setting Objectives:

- Define Clear Goals: Determine the specific legislative issues you want to address.
- Understand Your Audience: Know the legislators' stance on these issues.

2. Team Formation:

- Organizing Committee: Form a committee responsible for planning and logistics.
- Volunteer Teams: Recruit volunteers for different roles, including logistics, communications, and legislative liaison.

3. Logistics:

- Date Selection: Ideally, state lobbying activity will take place during a “week of advocacy” date range agreed upon by multiple units.
- Venue Booking: Secure a meeting place near the state capitol for briefings and debriefings.

4. Training and Materials:

- Advocacy Training: National Staff will convene and record an all-units training in advance of the State Lobby Week.
- Informational Materials: Fact sheets, position papers, and talking points will be prepared by National Staff for a range of topics, but does not preclude a unit from preparing documents around additional policy areas and advocacy efforts.

COMMUNICATION AND PROMOTION

1. Internal Communication:

- Regular Updates: Keep chapter members informed about the planning process, roles, and expectations.
- Information Packets: Distribute detailed itineraries, legislative agendas, and participant responsibilities.

2. External Communication:

- Legislator Engagement: Send formal invitations to state legislators to schedule meetings. Remember, legislator's calendars will fill up quickly during the legislative session, so early outreach is critical to securing meetings.
- Media Outreach: Utilize press releases, social media, and community outreach to publicize your advocacy effort.

EVENT DAY

1. Morning Briefing:

- Registration and Check-In: Ensure all participants are accounted for and receive their materials including policy briefs, schedules, etc.
- Opening Session: Conduct an opening session to motivate participants and review the day's agenda.

2. Legislative Meetings:

- Group Coordination: Divide participants into small groups for meetings with legislators.
- Advocacy in Action: Engage in meaningful dialogues with legislators, presenting your issues and asking for their support or opposition in policy areas that were chosen in advance.

3. Debriefing and Follow-Up:

- Debrief Session: Gather feedback from participants on their meetings and experiences. Take careful note of any follow-up items asked for by legislators or their staff. Providing timely feedback or supporting documents could be pivotal in your efforts.
- Thank You Notes: Send thank you letters to legislators and volunteers.

POST-EVENT ACTIVITIES

1. Evaluation:

- Assess Impact: Evaluate the effectiveness of the lobby day in terms of participant engagement and legislative response. National Staff will provide a mechanism to consolidate all feedback to frame and share best practices, as well as highlight major achievements and track legislative progress.

A well-organized Week of Action can significantly impact our legislative efforts. By following this guide, units can effectively plan, execute, and follow up on a successful state lobby week, ensuring that our collective voice is heard in legislatures throughout the nation.

ADVOCACY 101: THE IMPORTANCE OF STATE LOBBYING

Why State Lobbying Matters

In our continuing fight for social justice, the policies and laws enacted at the state level have profound impacts on our communities. State governments control a wide range of issues directly affecting our daily lives, from education and healthcare to voting rights and criminal justice.

By engaging in state lobbying, we can:

- **Influence Legislation:** Lobbying provides us an opportunity to influence lawmakers on legislation that can either advance or hinder our fight for civil rights and equity.
- **Educate and Inform:** Through direct dialogue, we educate legislators about the issues our communities face and advocate for solutions that benefit everyone.
- **Amplify Voices:** State Lobby Day amplifies the voices of those often unheard in the legislative process, ensuring that our diverse experiences and needs are considered.

A New Approach: A Designated Space for State Advocacy Materials

To facilitate effective advocacy, we have prepared and will continue to curate a series of materials to help you engage in meaningful and impactful conversations during state advocacy efforts. Additionally, these materials may be used whenever your unit determines is most advantageous and strategic to you, throughout the year. These materials include:

- **Policy Issue Briefs:** Detailed and condensed analysis of various policy issues, offering insights and talking points to guide your conversations and leave behind for legislators. These materials are based on issues that are percolating in current events, as well as those that have been memorialized from past resolutions.

- Advocacy Guide and Infrastructure Materials: Information on how to secure meetings and advocate effectively, state legislative calendars, and infrastructure documents to help facilitate your advocacy efforts.

Moving Forward Together

As state legislative sessions convene and we approach our Week of Advocacy, you are encouraged to engage with these materials as necessary or ask for assistance from National Staff. Our collective efforts will contribute to significant changes and advancements in our fight for civil rights and social justice. Every voice counts, and together, we can make a difference.

DOS AND DON'TS WHEN MEETING WITH A LEGISLATOR

Below are essential guidelines and best practices for conducting effective and respectful meetings with legislators. Adhering to these tips will ensure that your meeting is compliant, productive, professional, and leaves a memorable impression.

DO

1. Do Your Research

- Understand the Legislator's Position: It is critical that you know where the legislator stands on your selected issues in advance of your meeting.
- Background Check: As much as possible, familiarize yourself with their voting record, committees, and past statements on the issues that you choose to address.

2. Be Clear and Concise

- Agenda: Select the policy issues you want to advocate for and have a clear purpose for your meeting.
- Concise Communication: Be brief and to the point, as legislators have packed schedules, particularly during legislative session. Use the policy documents provided as a guide on how to condense the information you want to convey.

3. Be Prepared

- Bring Materials: Compile fact sheets, reports, and/or personal stories that support your position. Never underestimate the impact that your personal testimony can bring to an issue.
- Practice Your Pitch: Rehearse your main points to make yourself more comfortable, and anticipate that the legislator may have follow up questions for you.

4. Be Professional

- Dress Appropriately: Business or business casual attire is generally expected. If your unit has plans to dress uniformly in NAACP branded clothing, adhere to this request, if possible.
- Punctuality: Arrive on time for your meeting.

5. Be Respectful

- Politeness: There will be times where your position and the legislator's positions contrast. Maintain a calm and persistent perspective.
- Listen Actively: Engaging in conversation is much more valuable than parroting talking points.

6. Follow Up!

- Send a Thank-You Note: Express gratitude for their time.
- Recap Points: Reiterate your key messages in the message you send thanking the legislator for their time.

DON'T

1. Don't Be Unprepared

- Avoid Generalizations: Vague statements or unverified facts can undermine your credibility.
- Don't 'Wing It': Improvisation can lead to missed opportunities, or worse, misstatements of policy positions.

2. Don't Be Disrespectful

- Avoid Confrontation: Aggressive behavior can close doors to future dialogue.
- Don't Interrupt: Allow the legislator to finish their thoughts.

4. Don't Be Negative

- Avoid Being Overly Critical: Criticizing other legislators or parties can be off-putting.
- Stay Positive: Focus on solutions in addition to the problematic conditions that make advocacy necessary.

5. Don't Be Partisan

- Maintain Neutrality: As a nonprofit, we are not biased on candidates or political parties. Avoid showing favoritism to any political party as you frame your policy concerns and advocacy requests.
- Focus on Issues, Not Politics: Keep the discussion centered on the issues, not party politics.

6. Don't Lose Contact

- Stay Engaged: Keep the lines of communication open after the meeting.
- Offer Assistance: Be a resource for the legislator on your issue.

By following these tips you will maximize the effectiveness of your meetings during State Lobby Week. Remember, your goal is to build a relationship and make change based on data, respect, professionalism, and mutual understanding.

FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

The legislative process in the United States federal government is complex, just as the process in state governments. However, there are similarities in many areas including bill introduction, committee consideration, and signing into law. Also, the points where advocacy is necessary and effective are also similar.

This short guide provides a basic overview of the federal legislative process, but mirrors many of the processes used to create public laws in state government.

Step 1: Drafting a Bill

- Origins: A bill can be proposed by anyone, but only a member of Congress (either in the House of Representatives or the Senate) can formally introduce it.

- Content: A bill is a written document that outlines a new law, resolution, or amendments to existing laws.

Step 2: Introduction

- House or Senate: The bill is introduced in either the House or the Senate. The member of Congress sponsoring the bill presents it to their respective chamber, and the bill is assigned a unique identifying number. Sometimes a bill can be supported by multiple cosponsors.

Step 3: Committee Review

- Referral to Committee: Once introduced, the bill is referred to the committee that focuses on the bill's subject matter (e.g., education, health).
- Examination (Mark-up): The committee examines the bill, may hold hearings to gather information, and then votes on whether to pass the bill onto the full chamber.

Step 4: Floor Debate

- Debate: If approved by the committee, the bill is debated on the floor of the House or Senate. Members can discuss, amend, and debate the bill.
- Vote: After debate, the chamber votes on the bill. If it passes, it moves to the other chamber (House to Senate, or Senate to House).

Step 5: The Other Chamber

- Similar Process: The other chamber (House if the bill started in the Senate, and vice versa) goes through a similar process - committee review, debate, and voting.
- Amendments: This chamber may make amendments to the bill.

Step 6: Reconciliation

- Agreement on Text: If both chambers pass different versions of the bill, a conference committee made up of members from both chambers meets to reconcile differences.
- Final Approval: The reconciled bill is sent back to both chambers for a final vote.

Step 7: Presidential Action

- To the President: Once both chambers pass the same version of the bill, it is sent to the President.
- Options: The President can sign the bill into law, veto it, or take no action.
- Veto: Congress can override a presidential veto with a two-thirds vote in both chambers.

Step 8: Becoming Law

- Signed or Veto Overridden: A bill becomes law if it is signed by the President or if a presidential veto is overridden.
- No Action: If the President takes no action for ten days while Congress is in session, the bill automatically becomes law.

This is a simplified overview of the federal legislative process. Each step involves detailed procedures and rules, but this guide provides a basic understanding of how a bill becomes a law in the United States federal legislative branch.

FIND YOUR REPRESENTATIVE:

Advocating to the legislators who are aligned with a relevant caucus, sit on the committee that specializes in relevant subject matter, or your representative is a very powerful way to advance your policy perspective.

Step 1: Know Your District

Before you can find out who your representative is, you need to know the congressional district you live in. Your congressional district is determined based on your residential address.

Step 2: Use Online Resources

There are several online tools available to help you find your state, local and federal representative. The most common is to go the state government's website, which commonly has tools to find and contact your state representative. The state's website will also have a portal to look up a specific bill, as well

as find out which legislators sit on what committees. If you are advocating on a 'healthcare' issue, it makes sense to focus on members of the 'health' committee.

Step 3: Contact the Legislator

Once you have found out who your representative is, or the legislator(s) who handles the issue you are advocating on, you can contact them to schedule meetings, express your opinions on legislative matters, ask for assistance in matters with state agencies, or to attend local events.

Additional Tips

- Official websites and social media pages of legislators are convenient ways to keep track of the issues and current events that they care about. They also can be used to interact with the legislator.
- Stay Informed: Representatives can change due to elections, redistricting, or other reasons. It's a good idea to periodically check and confirm who current legislators are, which is also important to keep track of issues once the legislative session ends.

SAMPLE EMAIL:

Meeting Request for State Lobby Week - NAACP [YOUR STATE CONFERENCE]

Dear Honorable [Legislator's Name],

I hope this message finds you well. My name is [Your Name], and I am the [Your Position, e.g., State Advocacy Coordinator] for the NAACP's [Your State] Chapter. Our organization is steadfast in its mission to achieve equity, political rights, and social inclusion by advancing policies and practices that expand human and civil rights, eliminate discrimination, and accelerate the well-being, education, and economic security of Black people and all persons of color.

I am writing to respectfully request a meeting with you on [Date], in conjunction with our upcoming State Lobby Day. This day is dedicated to addressing issues that significantly impact our communities in [Your State], particularly in the realms of [issue 1, issue 2, and issue 3].

We would like our discussion to focus on [briefly outline specific state-level issues or bills]. Your leadership and perspective in the state legislature are crucial, and we are keen to share our community-based insights and recommendations for policies that promote equality and justice in [Your State].

Your dedication to serving the people of [Your State] aligns with our goals of fostering a society free of discrimination and inequality. We are optimistic that this meeting will be a meaningful step towards our shared aspirations for a just and equitable [Your State].

Thank you for considering this request. We look forward to engaging with you on these pivotal issues. Please let us know your availability, or contact us at [Your Contact Information] for any further details or to arrange the meeting.

Sincerely,

[Your Full Name][Your Position, e.g., State Advocacy Coordinator]NAACP [Your State] Conference [Your Contact Information]



AMPLIFY

Suggested Social Media Post

Hashtag: #NAACPAdvocates

Engaging our elected officials is a powerful tool for advocacy and change. Join us [DATE, TIME, LOCATION] as we take our issues and solutions to the state capital. naacp.org/advocacyweek #NAACPAdvocates

We're heading to the state capital to talk about [Issue 1], [Issue 2], [Issue 3]. Join us? naacp.org/advocacyweek #NAACPAdvocates

On [DATE], we met with [LAWMAKER NAMES/TAGS] and discussed [ISSUES DISCUSSED]. We know change starts with advocacy. Join us to hold our elected officials accountable. #NAACPAdvocates naacp.org/join (or a link to join on your website)

* Make sure to take images of your own from your event! Please send any images to the Marketing and Communications team at communications@naacpnet.org for potential additional amplification.

SHARE THE MESSAGE:



1. Feel free to develop your own customized posts to add stories, data, and quotes using the sample social media posts.
2. Add the #NAACPAdvocates hashtag to your social media posts.
3. Follow @NAACP on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook and share our content via your personal or organizational accounts.

GRAPHICS:

State Legislative Advocacy Week Drive Graphics: [Download Here](#)