Effective Advocacy Summary

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” Margaret Mead

Advocacy
- Writing an elected official is a good advocacy
- Calling your elected official is even better, especially if you can speak directly to your representative.
- Meeting with your elected official in person and using Personal Persuasion takes more time and effort, but it is the most influential advocacy strategy.
- File your Constituent Report Form

Writing or Meeting with Elected Officials
- Contact your representative. Make it clear that you are a constituent.
- Focus on one issue.
- Clearly state your issue in the subject line.
- Make it personal. Why do you care about this issue? How does it impact you? (don’t incriminate yourself)
- Provide accurate information.
- Include a specific call to action. In other words, what do you want them to do?
- Be polite.
- Even if it’s an official with whom you usually disagree, occasionally call to express thanks when they do something you like.

Build Bridges
- Learn about the elected official
- Discover commonalities
- Genuinely listen
- Ask open-ended questions
- Offer positive comments (on anything from their clothing to the issues).
- Find out what appeals to them. • Consider an issue from their perspective. • Observe body language. • Treat every question respectfully. • Leave a fact sheet or other material.
- Save new or additional information for a follow-up visit so that you may continue the conversation.

Don’t Build Walls
- Don’t force a “no” response!
- People are less likely to change their minds once they’ve publicly stated a position.
- You want them to stay open to new information.
- If you force them to take an opposition position, then you have no excuse to visit again.

If You Don’t Know the Answer to a Question
- They asked a question! That means they’re listening.
- You don’t have to be an expert, offer to get the information.
- This is an opportunity for a follow-up meeting to provide answers.

WE agree or we share…..
- Individual liberty
- Express your concerns about the opioid crisis
- Reduce budget costs of prisons, courts and law enforcement.
Common Ground statements

- North Carolinians support individual liberty.
- Adults should have freedom to smoke what they want.
- Relying on the self-reliance of North Carolinians to make their own decisions.

Pivot statements

- Use statements such as:
  - I appreciate your idea…
  - I like that you…
  - I think it’s really important that…
  - It’s clear to me that we both believe…
  - The fact that you feel this way shows that we both care deeply about…

Getting a Meeting

- Call the elected official’s office for an appointment.
- Once you have an appointment, be prepared for a meeting to be cancelled or rescheduled.
- Go to the elected official’s office, and wait for her/him to show up. When you see her/him, try to discuss your issue or get an appointment.
- If they are busy attending committee meetings, ask their staff when and where those meetings are. Go to the committee, and try to catch your elected official before or after the meeting.
- If you’re looking for a state legislator at the General Assembly, go to the pedestrian bridge. If you see your legislator, try to have a quick conversation.
- If you don’t live in the Raleigh area, schedule a meeting with your state legislators in their home district offices.

Media Activism

- Real activism requires action beyond simple online activities.
- Write letters to the editor.
- Social media

10 Letter-Writing Tips

- Keep it short--- usually 200 words or less.
- Focus on one or two main points.
- Put the most important information first and the least important last. Editors tend to cut from the bottom up.
- Cite the article to which you are responding by name, date, and author at the beginning of your letter.
- Remove any non-essential words, e.g. “In my opinion”, “I believe”, “It should be obvious”. You won’t have much space, so choose your words wisely.
- Maintain a civil tone. Avoid name calling or offensive language.
- Omit formatting such as boldface, all caps, or underlining.
- Respond to a specific previously published article or to breaking news.
- Respond within 1-2 days of the article’s publication.
- Write the letter in your own words—no “canned” messages or “scripts”.
- If you’re an expert on a topic, write a letter sharing your perspective based on your professional expertise.
- If you’ve been personally impacted by an issue, share your personal story.
- Submit the letter online or in the body of an email rather than mailing or faxing it. It’s much easier for an editor to copy and paste your letter. Do not email additional attachments.

Links

- CONSTITUENT REPORT FORM
- NEED to Develop FORM
- US Congress Senators - www.senate.gov
- US Congress Representative - www.house.gov
General Assembly scroll down and enter county – www.ncleg.gov/FindYourLegislators