



## How You Can Be an Advocate

### What is Advocacy?

Wikipedia defines advocacy broadly as, “an activity by an individual or group that aims to influence decisions within political, economic, and social institutions.” It is articulating your views on proposed laws, regulations, and policies that affect you, your family, and community. Advocacy is best accomplished by having many people voice their concerns.

### Public Advocacy

Public advocacy is educating the general public about an issue so that they will better understand and sympathize with your cause. Every time you speak to a group of individuals about your organization or issue concerning the value of the arts in society, you are doing public advocacy. Every time you post about an issue on social media, write a letter to the editor, or send an article to the newspaper, you are doing public advocacy.

### Legislative Advocacy

This is what most people think of when they hear the word advocacy. Legislative advocacy is working to influence legislation on a local, state, or national level. It can include efforts to introduce, implement, and iterate on legislation or to support existing or proposed legislation. Engaging in legislative advocacy is not difficult. Every time you write, call, or meet with elected officials, inform them about your organization or to discuss an issue you care about, you are engaging in legislative advocacy.

### Arts Advocacy

National arts advocacy organization, [American of the Arts](#), describes arts advocacy in their [Advocacy Toolkit](#):

“As a constituent, you are the ideal grassroots advocate to convey to members of Congress how essential the arts and arts education are to your community. You have the power to educate them about the importance of the arts in your community and to engage them on important arts issues on Capitol Hill. Without your help, your member of Congress may not realize the ability of the arts to support jobs, engage kids in

school, and change lives in your district. We want to make it easy for you to take action, build relationships with your representative's office, and highlight the advocacy work you are doing in your community and schools.”

## 1) Legislative Advocacy Tips

- **Be informed.** Read legislative/advocacy alerts carefully. Know both sides of an issue. Know when a bill is in committee, when the hearing will be held, and who the co-sponsors are.
- **Start early.** Pay attention to issues and proposals early in the process.
- **Be concise.** State your position simply and clearly because you will have a better chance of getting people to listen and respond.
- **Be specific.** Know what you want from your legislator – to draft legislation, propose an amendment or vote for a bill.
- **Be honest.** Don't exaggerate the facts. Every issue has two sides – be honest about the pros and cons of your issue.
- **Give personal examples.** Put your issue in human terms. Speak from your heart – give real examples of what your issue has meant to you personally. It is much more powerful than giving dry statistics.
- **Practice.** Explain your position to friends and family before meeting with a legislator or testifying before a committee.
- **Continue to communicate.** Keep others informed of your progress and meetings so that follow-up action can be planned.
- **Be courteous.** Always remember to thank legislators for their time and interest, even when they disagree with your position.
- **Be firm and confident.** You are expressing your belief about a particular issue. Be confident in your convictions.
- **Do not make threats.** Don't tell a legislator that you will not vote for him/her in the future if they do not do what you are asking. This could alienate him/her to your cause and may have long standing consequences.

- **Never argue with your legislator.** If the person you are meeting with will not support your issue, stick to the facts and ask him/her to consider your point of view. The goal here is to keep communication open and productive.
- **Do not give up.** Just because your legislator may not be supportive; others may help your efforts. Advocacy is an educational process and takes time.

## 2) New Mexico Legislature: An Overview

The New Mexico Legislature has two chambers:

Chamber	Membership	Length of Term	Time of Election
<a href="#">Senate</a>	42	4 years	All seats elected at every other general election
<a href="#">House of Representatives</a>	70	2 years	All seats elected at every general election

Each year the New Mexico Legislature convenes at noon on the third Tuesday in January. The length of a regular legislative session alternates between sixty (60) days in odd numbered years and thirty (30) days in an even numbered year. During a sixty-day session the number of bills that can be introduced has very few restrictions. In a thirty-day session, the legislature may **only** consider appropriations and revenue bills, bills drafted pursuant to a special message of the Governor, and vetoed bills from previous sessions.

The Governor may call special sessions, on matters contained in the Governor’s proclamation to be considered by the Legislature. The Legislature can also call itself into session when three-fifths of the members representing each chamber certify to the Governor that an emergency exists in the affairs of the state.

### Organization

The New Mexico Legislature is organized on a partisan basis. Members of the Republican and Democratic parties in each chamber meet in caucus before a session begins to organize themselves. Most of the work of the Legislature takes place in committees. Standing committees meet during sessions and interim committees meet between sessions. Committees vary in size party strength reflecting chamber-wide party strength. Committee chairs have power and flexibility in guiding committee business and expediting or delaying legislation.

### House of Representatives

The majority party in the House of Representatives selects a nominee for Speaker of the House and elects a majority floor leader, a majority whip and a caucus chair.

The **Speaker of the House** is the most important leader. The Speaker is the presiding officer of the House who administers the order of business, answers parliamentary inquiries, and makes parliamentary rulings subject to appeal to the membership of the House. The Speaker also assigns bills to committees, signs all passed bills, resolutions, and memorials and certifies the passage of bills over the Governor's veto. The Speaker also has the authority to appoint committee chairs and members of all standing committees of the House.

The **Majority Floor Leader** is second in rank to the Speaker. The Majority Floor Leader plays a major role in the scheduling and conduct of debate and helps to manage the conduct of business in the House.

The **Majority Whip** assists the Majority Floor Leader and works to keep track of the positions of party members on major issues.

The minority party elects a minority floor leader, minority whip and a caucus chair. Their duties are similar to those of their majority counterparts.

## House Standing Committees

### Substantive Committees:

- [Agriculture, Acequias, and Water Resources](#)
- [Appropriations & Finance](#)
- [Commerce & Economic Development](#)
- [Consumer & Public Affairs](#)
- [Education](#)
- [Energy, Environment & Natural Resources](#)
- [Health & Human Services](#)
- [Judiciary](#)
- [Labor, Veterans', and Military Affairs](#)
- [Local Government, Land Grants, & Cultural Affairs](#)
- [Government, Elections, & Indian Affairs](#)
- [Taxation & Revenue](#)
- [Transportation, Public Works, & Capital Improvements](#)

### Procedural Committees:

- Printing & Supplies
- [Rules & Order of Business](#)
- Enrolling & Engrossing

## Senate

The Lieutenant Governor is president of the Senate and the presiding officer. The Lieutenant Governor can vote only in the case of a tie. The majority caucus selects a nominee for President Pro Tempore and elects a majority floor leader, a majority whip and a caucus chair. The minority party elects a minority floor leader, a minority whip and a caucus chair.

If the Lieutenant Governor is not presiding over the Senate, the President Pro Tempore presides or appoints a Senator to preside. The **President Pro Tempore** is the most important Senate leader and chairs the *Committee's Committee*, which exercises most of the procedural and administrative powers in the Senate. The majority and minority floor leaders and whips have similar duties to those in the House, except that Senate party leaders also serve on the Committee's Committee.

Subject to approval by the entire Senate, the Committee's Committee makes committee assignments.

### Senate Standing Committees

- [Conservation](#)
- [Education](#)
- [Finance](#)
- [Health & Public Affairs](#)
- [Indian, Rural, & Cultural Affairs](#)
- [Judiciary](#)
- [Rules](#)
- [Tax, Business, & Transportation](#)

## Legislative Process

The State Legislature is the primary policy making body in state government. The Legislature passes bills that must be signed by the Governor in order to become law. A primary function of the Legislature is to appropriate funds for the operation of the state government and for public education. In between sessions, interim committees meet to hear public input and to study issues in greater depth. The [Legislative Finance Committee \(LFC\)](#) is the interim committee that recommends the appropriations to be included in the state budget. The executive also makes recommendations for budget appropriations. During session, the [House Appropriations and Finance Committee](#) and the [Senate Finance Committee](#) develop the general appropriation bills. **These two committees hear all bills that appropriate money.**

The [Legislative Council Service \(LSC\)](#), which ensures that bills are in the proper format and conform to state constitutional requirements, drafts all bills. The LSC provides year-round professional staff services for legislators and is supervised by the LFC,

which is headed by the legislative leadership from both parties. LSC staff is prohibited from advocating or opposing legislation and the law requires confidentiality between the LSC staff and legislators. Additionally, the LSC prepares research reports, maintains a legislative reference library, provides staff assistance to interim committees, oversees the Bill room and prepares the Bill Locator, a daily summary of the status of every piece of legislation introduced during a session.

To follow legislation as it occurs during a session, log onto the [NM Legislative Website](#)

### **3) New Mexico Legislative Process: Passage of a Bill**

#### **Introduction & Committee Referral**

Legislators may introduce bills singly or by committee, in either the Senate or the House of Representatives. After a bill has been drafted and prepared for introduction the Chief Clerk assigns it a number. The Reading Clerk reads it by number and title twice, along with the principal name of the sponsor. The presiding officer orders it printed and assigns it to one or more appropriate committees for further study.

#### **Committee Consideration & Action**

Most of the consideration of legislation in New Mexico occurs in committees. It is in committees that the public has the opportunity to testify in favor or opposition of a particular bill. After considering the testimony, the committee can take one of several actions:

1. The Committee may recommend to the legislative body a *Do Pass*, *Do Pass as Amended* or *Do Not Pass*, or it may refer the bill back to the floor or to another committee *Without Recommendation*;
2. The Committee may substitute a new and similar bill for the original bill, incorporating changes the committee may wish to make;
3. The Committee may recommend referral of the bill to another committee;
4. The Committee may simply do nothing and let the bill die by not reporting it out of committee.

The committee reports are subject to adoption by the full House or Senate. When the favorable committee report is adopted, the bill is placed on the calendar, which is the schedule of business the House or Senate must consider on any day.

#### **Final Passage**

When a bill is called for its third reading, members may debate its pros and cons on the chamber floor. Amendments may be added at this stage, or the entire bill may be substituted by another similar bill. The sponsor of the bill is allowed to close a debate by speaking last on the bill. A final vote is taken and recorded.

## **Sent to the Other House**

If a bill receives a favorable vote, it is then sent with a letter of transmittal to the other house where it will follow a similar procedure. Duplication of procedure serves as a safety check to ensure that all aspects of the bill have been considered before it is enacted into law.

## **Concurrence**

A bill that is amended in the second house must be sent back to the first house for agreement. This is called concurrence. If concurrence is denied, the second house votes on whether to *recede* or withdraw from its amendment. If it fails to recede, the bill is usually sent to a *conference committee* to attempt to work out a version agreeable to both houses. In order for a bill to pass, both houses must agree to the report of the conference committee.

## **Enrolling & Engrossing**

When both houses in the Legislature have agreed on a final version of the bill, it is *enrolled & engrossed*, which means that it is copied with all amendments or changes. The presiding officers of both houses sign the bill, and it is sent to the Governor for signature.

## **Governor's Action**

The Governor may sign the bill, in which case it becomes one of the laws of New Mexico, or:

1. The Governor may *veto* the bill, which means that s/he disapproves of it. If the Legislature is still in session, it may attempt to override the Governor's veto.
2. If the Governor fails to sign the bill within three days while the Legislature is still in session, it becomes law without their signature.
3. If the Legislature has adjourned, the Governor has twenty (20) days from adjournment to decide about bills the Legislature has sent. If the Governor fails to act upon a bill after the Legislature has adjourned, it is called a *pocket veto*.
4. The Governor of New Mexico may also "line item" veto bills.

## **Laws**

Not all laws go into effect at the same time. Some bills carry an emergency clause and become effective as soon as the Governor signs them. All other bills, except bills that carry a later effective date, become effective ninety (90) days following the adjournment of the Legislature.

## **4) How to Influence the Legislative Process**

**Define the Issue.**

### **Join or Form a Coalition**

- Identify others interested in your cause.
- Identify the opposition.

### **Development of a Bill**

- Identify and contact key legislator(s) in drafting the language.
- Identify and contact co-sponsors.
- Utilize the media.

### **Attend Public Hearings**

- Prepare testimony.
- Make phone calls.
- Utilize the media.

### **Maintain Constituent Pressure**

- Write letters.
- Make phone calls.
- Encourage others to write and call.
- Utilize the media.

### **Floor Votes**

- Continue advocating.
- Advocate around amendments.

### **Governor's Signature or Veto**

- More letters and phone calls.
- Follow-up and send thank-you notes.

## **5) Making an Impact**

When working with legislators, the following are useful tips for making an impact. Much of this has already been mentioned in various sections above but is important enough to reemphasize here.

- **Do your homework.** Understand the issue and make certain that it is a legitimate concern. Do not contact state officials about federal or local matters, but focus instead, on issues where a legislator actually has influence or impact. When possible, cite a specific bill or law to focus communication. And, as always, be specific.
- **Use personal experience.** When addressing a problem or issue with state government, describe how it personally affects you or the organization you are representing. Be honest about potential negatives. Tell the whole story as best



you know it - legislators do not want to be surprised or caught off guard when asked for help.

- **Be timely.** The most effective communication is that which arrives early in the legislative process, preferably at the committee level.
- **Decide how best to contact a legislator.** Explanations of the pros and cons of various communications methods are described in the next section.
- **Request a response.** If appropriate, ask for a specific response from the legislator. For example, if a bill is coming up for a hearing, ask a legislator to attend the hearing and to share his/her thoughts. If a bill will be voted on, ask the legislator to contact you regarding his/her vote on the issue. If you receive no response, follow up.
- **Reward good work.** Say thank you. If the legislator has made a special effort on your behalf, recognize that by attending a campaign fundraiser, posting on social media, writing a letter to the local press, letting their peers know what they've done.
- **Use the legislator's staff.** Every state legislator has staff. They are full- or part-time state employees who work on constituent questions with state agencies and who work on legislation. In most instances, contact with a staff member is as effective as direct contact with the legislator.
- **Maintain the relationship.** The best way to get a legislator's attention is with ongoing, consistent contact and interaction. It is important to keep in touch with your legislator on a regular basis, not just when you need something.
- **Legislators are human.** Each legislator is one out of hundreds of decision-makers. Do not expect a legislator to perform miracles for you. Also keep in mind, that legislators have many demands for their time and attention. Always be considerate of the legislator's time both in and away from the office. Legislators are human and need to be treated with courtesy.

## Contacting a Legislator

You can find out who your legislators are on the [New Mexico Legislature website](#).

Some thoughts to keep in mind when contacting your legislator:

- Legislators want to hear from their constituents about important issues.
- Whatever method you use in contacting a legislator, keep it brief and focus on only one issue at a time. Legislators' offices get flooded with mail, emails, phone

messages, and visitors, and each legislator needs to know a little about hundreds of issues each session. If you make your point quickly and clearly, it will be remembered.

- Timing is crucial. If you go too early in the process, your issue may be forgotten. If you wait until the legislative session has started, your message may get lost in the crowd. Follow the progress of a bill and make contact with the right people at the right time. Keep informed and up-to-date.

## **Writing Your Legislator**

When writing to your legislator, either via email or snail mail, it is important to give tangible evidence of your concerns. The more simply your position can be explained, the more likely the legislator will be persuaded to support it. Get to the point in clear, concise language with the most salient facts and arguments up front. How is it affecting you and your community? What specific action would help you with your need?

Before you start, remember to:

- If you are citing a specific bill in your letter, mention it by number (HB###; SB###).
- Identify yourself as a consumer, parent, board member and explain how the issue personally affects you or your community.
- Be brief and stick to a single issue. Keep your email or letter to one page, if possible.
- Say things in your own words. Even if you are following a sample email or letter, change it so that it sounds individual.
- Request a specific response. Ask whether the legislator will sponsor a bill for you, vote for or against an existing bill, etc. If you do not ask, you will get a vague response thanking you for your input, but with no real commitment or information.
- Send a thank you letter when your legislator votes as you have requested or helps you with your cause.
- And, no matter what your concern or issue is, to give your letter the most impact always include the following:
  - My name is \_\_\_\_\_, I live in your district.
  - I work in your district. (if applicable)
  - I vote in your district.

Here is [a link with good information on crafting an email to an elected official](#).

## **Using Social Media**

Most legislators use social media platforms to interact with and push information out to their constituents directly. You can use social media in the same way to communicate with your legislators.

Twitter and Facebook are the social media platforms that are most(?) commonly used by legislators to interact with constituents.

What makes social media an effective medium for interacting with legislators is the public nature of the communications. A message that you post on a legislator's Facebook page or in a Tweet that you tag them in will be publicly viewable by and will show up in the feeds of those to whom you and the legislator are connected. Because of the public nature of social media and the immediacy of this platform, legislative offices will often reply more quickly to a Facebook or Twitter message than they would to a letter or email. This makes social media especially useful when communicating something that is time-sensitive – for instance if a vote is about to take place.

In general, the communication principles enumerated under “Writing Your Legislator” above are relevant in composing a social media post. However, with a social media post it is generally best to limit the length to just one or two sentences and then link to relevant pictures, press releases, letters, articles, or other explanatory materials as necessary.

Although social media can be used as the sole means of communicating with a legislator, it is generally going to be most effective when used to enhance the impact of letter/email writing, phone calls, and/or in-person meetings, which enable more in-depth explanation or discussion.

## **Calling Your Legislator**

Although a phone call can be an effective and personal way to communicate with your legislator, it can sometimes be challenging—especially during the legislative session—to reach your legislator directly and may have to leave several messages before you get a response from staff.

If you decide to call, here are some points to remember:

- Call the legislator's office directly.
- Give your name and address, especially if you are a constituent.

- Have your information organized and keep it brief.
- Practice what you will say before you call.
- If you cannot reach your legislator, ask to speak to the aide responsible for your issue. In many instances the aide knows more about your issue than your legislator and will present your ideas to him/her.
- Clearly articulate whether you are in support or against a specific bill.
- Thank them for their time.
- If time allows follow-up with a letter restating your points and thanking the person for their time.

And remember, an effective telephone call always includes these items:

- My name is \_\_\_\_\_, I live in your district.
- I work in your district. (if applicable)
- I vote in your district.

## **Visiting Your Legislator**

Perhaps the most effective way to voice your opinion is through personal contact with your legislator at their office or home district. Establishing and maintaining a relationship with your legislator is useful because as other issues arise, you will already have an interested party in place.

Before you meet with your legislator, it is important to have a plan of action:

- Always have three or four key points clearly in mind. Writing them out will help.
- Research your legislator's positions on your issues before you go. Knowing where he/she stands on the issue will help in framing your point of view.
- If available, bring along information, such as fact sheets that will help in making your point. Use your time with your legislator wisely. Do not digress and spend too much time with small talk.
- Be on time. Legislators are busy people with tight schedules. If you are going to be late, call to let them know.
- Dress appropriately. Treat this meeting as you would any other business situation.
- Have an agenda prepared and stick to it.

- Be brief. Expect no more than 15-20 minutes and in many instances, 5-10 minutes.
- Do not be upset if the legislator is not available when you arrive or has cancelled. If possible, ask to speak with an aide and present them with the information you have prepared. Follow-up with the legislator in writing concerning the meeting.
- If you have successfully met with your legislator, follow-up in writing and briefly restate your position. Thank the legislator for his/her time.

## **Public Hearings**

Throughout the legislative session, public hearings are held on bills. Citizens may provide testimony at these hearings and will often have significant impact on their outcome.

It is critical that anyone wishing to testify at a public hearing be prepared. Speakers generally have no more than five (5) minutes to express their opinion, with three (3) minutes often being the norm. The following points may be useful in preparing for giving testimony:

- Always verify the date, time, and place of the hearing. To do this, you can check the schedule for the appropriate committee online at [nmlegis.gov](http://nmlegis.gov) under the Committees tab or call the sponsor of the bill or the clerk of the appropriate committee.
- Make certain that you understand the bill or issue. Know the status of the bill and its potential impact on your community. Be familiar with any opposing views and be prepared to speak to those issues as well.
- Write your statement out in clear concise language. Bring typed copies for committee members and others who may be interested. Double space and use only one side of the page.
- Rehearse your testimony. Try to anticipate any questions you may be asked by committee members and practice answering those as well.
- As a group, plan who will be at the hearing and who will testify first. Assign different parts of an issue to various speakers. Follow-up any testimony with personal visits to legislators' offices, phone calls, and e-mail.

- If you cannot attend a hearing, mail a copy of your statement to the hearing committee and ask that it be included as part of the record. Also request a copy of the testimony presented at the meeting.
- If you have been selected to speak on behalf of an issue, at the hearing:
  - Dress professionally. Your appearance may be as important to some legislators as what you have to say.
  - Arrive early (at least 30 minutes) and register so the committee will know that you plan to testify. Fill out a registration slip even if you do not plan to speak. It will serve as a measure of how many people are in favor or against an issue. Give your registration slip and copies of your testimony to the committee clerk or page.
  - Be prepared to wait. There may be other bills on the agenda.
  - Pay close attention to others' testimony and the committee members' reaction to those comments. This can help you in how to present your testimony. If you do not have anything new to add to previous testimony, simply note that you agree with the earlier speaker(s) and move on.
  - When you begin to speak, first greet the Chair and the committee members. ("Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and members of the committee...") Introduce yourself and, if appropriate, your organization or group.
  - Be brief. Plan on speaking for 3-5 minutes or less.
  - Speak slowly and clearly. Remain courteous and do not argue with committee members or members of the audience. Simply state the reasons for your position.
  - Mention why action is necessary in support of your issue. Mention others who support your position.
  - Speak from your heart. Powerful testimony is a combination of personal stories and accurate, current statistics.
  - Be prepared for questions. Following your testimony, ask if there are any questions. Answer only those you can answer correctly. If other members of your group are present and can answer those you cannot, point them out to the committee members. If you do not have an answer, simply state that you do not know. Never fake an answer. Write the question down and tell the committee that you will get back to them with a response. Send the response in writing to the Chair.

- o Thank the Chair and the committee for the opportunity to express your concerns.
- Following the hearing
  - o Keep a copy of all statements made along with any questions that you or other members were asked and the responses.
  - o If you promised to provide additional materials, be sure to do so as soon as possible.
  - o Continue to follow the bill's progress. Contact legislators personally or write a follow-up letter.
  - o Have the group meet soon after the hearing to plan any follow-up activities, and to reassess strategies.

### **More Tips for Successful Public Testimony**

Public hearings are an excellent way to influence decision-makers and to get your issues out to the general public. It is vital to develop public testimony that is clear, concise, has emotional impact, and will be heard and remembered by public officials. The best testimonies have common characteristics. Most importantly, testimonies should be accurate, logical, dignified, useful, short, and heartfelt.

#### **Accurate**

When using statistics to back up testimony, make certain that they are correct and up to date. Accuracy also means sticking to the issue at hand.

#### **Logical**

Provide logical public testimony. Perhaps one of these most salient components of public testimony is that it is logical. Begin with a statement describing the issue or problem to be tackled and your position on that issue. Include how what you are supporting provides resolution to the problem and make recommendation of the action that needs to be taken that is rational and possible.

#### **Dignified**

Pay attention to protocol. In New Mexico, protocol is extremely important and must be followed at all times. This includes greeting the committee appropriately (Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and committee members) and maintaining that protocol throughout your presentation. Always recognize the Chair before speaking, followed by a particular member if a question has been asked. For

example, you would say: “Mr. Chairman, Senator/Representative Smith.” Always thank the committee following your testimony.

### **Useful**

Don't waste time. The best testimony provides decision-makers with useful information that they did not have and that will serve in helping to resolve the issue at hand. If you have a solution, make it a part of your testimony. Be careful that what you recommend is amenable to others in your group.

### **Short**

Keep it short. If you cannot get your point across in 3-4 minutes or less, you will most likely be cut off before you are finished. Short, concise, well-delivered testimonies are received more favorably, and make the testifier appear competent. Ill-relevant and repetitive testimony has the opposite effect.

### **Heartfelt**

Presenting your testimony in human terms stirs emotions whether it hits at the gut level or goes for the throat. Emotions are best stirred in testimony delivered by individuals who will be directly affected by the issue. Talking about individuals has greater impact than talking about groups or organizations. Use the logic with the emotional content, or your message may get lost.

## **6) Twelve Ways to Help Legislators Feel Good About What You Do**

1. Write a thank you letter to your state representatives whenever you receive a state grant.
2. Keep legislators on your permanent mailing list so they are aware of your activities.
3. Always invite legislators to your events. When they attend, acknowledge their presence.
4. Invite legislators to programs that feature students and young people. Give a tour of your arts education program(s).
5. Establish a legislative committee on your board of directors.
6. Send your business card to legislators and offer to serve as a contact for arts information.
7. Consider giving your legislator an award for his/her support of the arts.



8. Thank, acknowledge, or feature profiles on legislators in your organization's published materials (newsletter, program, etc.)
9. Convene a meeting each year before the legislative session with local legislators and arts colleagues to discuss key issues affecting the arts.
10. Hold a "Business and the Arts" breakfast or lunch for local legislators and arts supporters.
11. Consider placing a legislative spouse or partner on your board.
12. Always attend committee hearings when arts funding is being considered.

### **Never Forget to Say Thank You**

It is important to always thank those public officials who have assisted you in affecting change and solving an issue that you have brought to their attention. Some tips on how and where to say thank you include:

A thank you letter. This is the simplest effort. In your letter tell your legislator how he/she made a difference and insert a compelling anecdote. If the public official's action required special courage or effort, let them know how much you appreciate their extra work. Keep it short and to the point.

Readdress the same letter to the "Letters to the Editor" of your local newspaper. This is one of the most widely read pages in any local paper. The goal here is not to persuade, but to publicly applaud the public official's efforts.

Say "thank you" in a public forum. This can be a general event, such as a town hall meeting in your community hosted by your legislator, a related event, such as a meeting of arts organizations where the legislator will appear, or an unrelated event that provides a public opportunity to thank the individual(s) who helped with your issue. You can also use social media to publicly thank your legislator for their support.

### **Additional Resources for Arts Advocacy**

[National Assembly of State Arts Agencies Advocacy](#)

[Americans for the Arts Advocacy](#)

[Western States Arts federation Advocacy](#)

[Creative New Mexico](#)

[Performing Arts Alliance Advocacy](#)  
[The Art of Education Advocacy - 4 Effective Ways You Can Advocate for the Arts](#)

**The information for this handbook has been adapted from the following resources:**

[NAMI Wisconsin](#)  
[Americans for the Arts](#)  
[Arizonans for Cultural Development](#) - Advocacy Tips  
[Citizens for the Arts in Pennsylvania](#)  
[American Planning Association](#)  
Illinois Arts Alliance Foundation  
Lutheran Office of Governmental Ministry-New Mexico  
[Missouri Citizens for the Arts](#)  
Wisconsin Council on Children and Families  
[National Volunteer Fire Council Guide to Communicating with Elected Officials](#)