

For Public Employees: Being An Advocate From the Inside

Here are *five things to think about* with respect to your role as advocates.

(1) **Advocacy and Lobbying are not the same:**

Advocacy	Speaking Up; to plead a cause, make the case for another.
Lobbying	Attempts to influence decisions of legislators about a pending piece of legislation. (Note: discussing an issue does not = lobbying.)

Much of what you are likely to do is *advocacy*, not *lobbying*, and you can advocate for people, programs, and issues you care about.

(2) **The Legislative Process is set up to answer 3 questions:**

- Is bill a good idea?* (this gets answered in Policy Committees)
- Is bill a good use for tax dollars?* (Answered in Appropriations, Ways & Means Committees)
- Is bill able to win support of 51% of voters?* (Answered on House & Senate Floors)

You can help provide information to determine the answers to all three. It's part of the job.

(3) **Along the way, there is much you can help with:**

background/history	statistics (collect & interpret)
budget estimates	what changes in laws would mean
telling the stories	forming positions and educating legislators
educating the public	helping others who do all these

(4) **Some Possibilities:**

Can join groups or coalitions as “informational members” (unlisted).

Can influence unions as to their positions; participate through unions.

Can exert influence through membership on faith community committees or as part of professional organizations.

Can encourage family members to play active roles.

Can participate in local, state, or national advocacy groups.

Can serve on Non-profit agency boards.

Can invite legislators to agencies, prepare site visits, help contractees to set up/conduct site visits with elected officials.

PLUS...

Can do a lot on your own time: can lobby, be part of telephone and/or letter trees.

(5) **Plus, you can help advocates in still more ways:**

Can aid in issue campaigns, provide reports, statistics, etc.

Can explain Regulations and how they are developed.

Can help others understand the process as well as specific bills/policies

Can be accessible to advocates -- helps you reflect their views accurately

Can contribute to newsletters of non-profit groups.

Can help organize retirees – they can talk about things current employees can't (e.g. some current workers are constrained in many ways; retirees are not).

Can attend lobby days - just be sure to take the day off if you plan to lobby.

Can help with Fact Sheets – accurate information is in everyone's interest.

Can supervise interns, let advocates “shadow” you.

Can speak at classes, congregations, PTAs, other community groups.

Can distribute “tools” like voter registration forms, League of Women Voter pamphlets (called TRY's - They Represent You).

Bottom Line: think of your job as including --

Outreach:	you can and should reach out to community groups, help them be more effective advocates;
Motivation:	by making laws and policies understandable, you motivate others to get involved and to speak up;
Basic “tools:”	information about Take 5 Tables, letters, visits, telephone or email “trees.”

Use Careful Communication: You can NOT abuse your role; can NOT speak for your agency unless that is your assigned job; you must NOT trade on your position as an agency employee when lobbying as a private citizen. You can NOT use public resources (e.g., computer, salaried time, copy machine) to lobby.

But you do not lose your rights as a citizen: you can speak up on your own time, using your own resources, in your own personal style. And you DO have the right to help others be effective advocates for themselves, their families, their communities, and programs that help them.