

NOT AN ~~ACCIDENT~~

Legislative Advocacy Toolkit

"Statistics are important but stories are even better." - Candace Lightner

Welcome to our Legislative Advocacy Toolkit! This resource is designed to help you understand the legislative process and effectively advocate for change. Whether you're new to advocacy or looking to refine your skills, this toolkit provides the guidance you need to make a difference.

Understanding Legislative Advocacy

Legislative advocacy involves influencing lawmakers to enact or modify laws. It's a powerful way to create change and address issues that matter to your community.

Our organization has been involved in the introduction and passage of numerous bills. Understanding the intricacies of the legislative process and the permissible ways to advocate for your cause is essential for achieving successful outcomes.

Legal Considerations for Non-Profits

As a 501(c)(3) organization, you can engage in some lobbying activities without jeopardizing your tax-exempt status. However, there are limitations:

Permissible Activities: Educate legislators and the public, encourage policy changes, hold informational meetings, respond to requests for testimony, and more.

Lobbying Limitations: A substantial part of your activities cannot be aimed at influencing legislation.

Steps to Successful Legislative Advocacy

Identify a Compelling Issue: Choose an issue that the public can support and that addresses a real problem.

Define Your Target Audience: Determine who will be most affected by the issue.

Select an Effective Leader: Ensure your spokesperson is knowledgeable and speaks with one voice.

Set Clear Goals: Have both long-term and short-term goals. Highlight any positive outcomes/solutions as a result of your work.

Align with Your Mission: Ensure your advocacy efforts reflect your organization's mission.

Develop a Strategy and Action Plan: Work with partners and sponsors to create a flexible plan.

Action Tools

- Email/Letter Templates: Pre-drafted messages for supporters to personalize and send.
- Phone Scripts: Quick scripts for calling legislators.
- Social Media Toolkits: Sample tweets, hashtags, graphics for advocacy campaigns.
- Petitions: Online petitions for specific legislation.

Create a Campaign Slogan: Make your cause identifiable with a catchy slogan.

Produce Campaign Materials: Include spokesperson talking points, issue briefs, data visualizations, position papers, graphics, victim stories/testimonials when possible, social media content, and a traditional media and a press kit which should feature a press release, media advisory and journalistic news release/blog.

Engage with Legislators: Find a sponsor and co-sponsors for your bill.

- Issue a joint press release with sponsors.
- Find Your Legislator Tool: Link to official sites or a zip code search.
- Provide contact directory links for federal and state representatives
- Contact Lists: Email and phone numbers of key legislators and committees.
- Legislative Calendar: Important dates (sessions, hearings, votes).

Mobilize Public Support: Use campaigns, petitions, and social media to create pressure.

Testify in Committees: Provide testimony and support for your legislation.

Negotiate and Compromise: Be open to amendments to gain broader support.

Leverage Media Coverage: Use local media to alert the public and attract support for pending legislation. Write op eds, blogs, and encourage the media to cover your issue in articles, blogs and TV/online shows.

- Develop an active and current local, state, regional, and national press list.

Stay Persistent: Be prepared for setbacks and continue advocating.

List Events & Campaigns

- Upcoming Advocacy Days
- Virtual Town Halls
 - Invite the media and other local stakeholders to your public meetings
- Lobby Day Guide Download

Sample Materials

Sample Letter of Support

Not An Accident Supports Texas SB31 & HB62

Dear Senator Judith Zaffirini and Representative Tom Craddick,

I am writing on behalf of Not An Accident, an international organization with more than 50 partners. We support penalizing drivers who use a phone while driving. SB31 and HB62 will demonstrate that mobile device use while driving will not be tolerated. This behavior kills thousands on our roadways and injures thousands more. We need to send a clear message to drivers that their focus should be on driving safely.

Sincerely,

Candace Lightner, Co-Founder of Not An Accident Campaign

Sample Thank you Letter to Legislators:

August 22, 2025

Senator Christopher J. Ryan
333 East Washington Street
State Office Bldg., Room 800
Syracuse, NY 13202
Assemblymember William B. Magnarelli
333 East Washington Street, Room 840
Syracuse, NY 13202

Re: Deadly Driving Bill (S.6485c/A.3981c)

Honorable Senator Ryan and Assembly Transportation Chair Magnarelli –

_____ strongly supports passage of your amended Deadly Driving bill S.6485c/A.3981c. This legislation will save lives and stop traffic violence. The streamlined version of the bill will finally hold drivers accountable when they are driving while intoxicated by any substance. New York will no longer limit enforcement to drivers impaired by alcohol, cannabis and the controlled substances listed in Public Health Law §3306.

New York State was once a leader in combatting impaired driving fatalities. But those fatalities and serious injuries have skyrocketed, causing the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to downgrade New York's status as a "high performing state" to a "mid-range state". Behind every statistic is a devastated family from every community across the state. And every crash represents a failure of the state to keep roadway users safe. Passing the Deadly Driving bill (S.6485c/A.3981c) is an important step toward reversing this trend.

With the passage of the bill, New York State will join the ranks of the other 46 states that do not limit impaired or intoxicated driving enforcement to a persistently incomplete list of drugs that might not be able to be identified in the first place. A driver's refusal to take an identifying chemical test will no longer operate to allow dangerous drivers to avoid accountability. The bill's passage will also bring New York into compliance with the National Transportation Safety Board's (NTSB) safety recommendation, sent to Governor Hochul in 2023.

Dangerous drivers will be stopped before they crash and kill. Existing interventions of assessment, treatment, education, behavior modification, supervision and licensing will be used to prevent recidivism and deaths. The amended bill retains the benefits of yearly reports on traffic enforcement equity, has no impact on legalized cannabis, does not expand police powers or car stops, includes a medical affirmative defense and a five-year sunset clause to study implementation before the statute becomes permanent. Procedural supports that were part of the original bill should be considered in future legislation.

Sincerely,

Your name and title

Educational Resources

- Fact Sheets: Issue-specific one-pagers with data and stories.
- Impact Stories: Real-life stories illustrating why legislation matters.
- Videos/Webinars: Recordings on advocacy training or legislative updates.

Sample Talking Points:

Oral Fluid Legislation:

- Non-invasive sample collection
- Decreases potential use of adulterants
- Preferred by law enforcement
- Scientifically reliable
- Indicates recent use only

Conclusion

Success in legislative advocacy can be measured by the passage of the bill, stakeholder support, public awareness, effective communication, alignment with legislative goals, and long-term impact. Stay transparent, engage with your community, and persist in your efforts.

Reporting & Feedback

- Legislative Scorecards: Track how legislators vote on your issues.
- Advocacy Reporting Form: Supporters report who they contacted and the response.
- Updates & Wins: Regularly updated progress on legislative priorities. (e.g., “Over 2,000 emails sent to legislators last month!”)

Advocacy Resources

These are tools, materials, and information designed to support advocates and their organizations in promoting a specific cause, influencing public policy, or advancing legislative goals. They provide knowledge, strategies, and practical guidance on effective communication, mobilization, and engagement with policymakers and the public.

1. **Research Materials:** Studies, reports, and white papers related to legislative issues.
2. **Case Studies:** Examples of successful legislation or policy changes, including lessons learned and best practices.
3. **Statutes and Regulations:** Relevant laws and regulatory frameworks that impact the legislative process.

4. **Templates and Guides:** Sample bills, resolutions, or advocacy letters that can be adapted for use.
5. **Contact Lists:** Information for key stakeholders, including legislators, advocacy groups, and community organizations.
7. **Data and Statistics:** Key figures and statistics that support the legislative agenda or highlight issues.
8. **Media Resources:** Guidance on how to engage with the media, including press release templates and media contact lists.
9. **Networking Opportunities:** Information on events or forums that connect advocates with each other and with decision-makers.
10. **Social media** posts to engage legislators or the community.

Social media serves as a powerful advocacy resource due to its ability to connect people, amplify messages, and mobilize action quickly. Here are some key aspects of how social media can be utilized in advocacy:

1. **Education the Public:** Platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram allow advocates to share information about issues, educate the public, and highlight the importance of their cause.
2. **Community Building:** Social media facilitates the creation of online communities where advocates can connect, share experiences, and support one another. This sense of belonging can enhance engagement and motivation.
3. **Real-time Engagement:** Advocates can interact with their audience and stakeholders in real time, responding to questions, addressing concerns, and providing updates on legislative developments.
4. **Campaign Promotion:** Social media is an effective channel for promoting advocacy campaigns, including events, petitions, and fundraising efforts. Visual content like infographics and videos can capture attention and drive participation.
5. **Mobilization:** Calls to action can be disseminated rapidly, encouraging followers to contact legislators, attend rallies, or participate in other forms of activism. Hashtags can help unify efforts and make campaigns more visible.
6. **Storytelling:** Personal stories shared on social media can humanize issues and create emotional connections, making it easier for others to understand and relate to the advocacy cause.

7. **Influencer Collaboration:** Partnering with social media influencers or prominent figures can help expand reach and lend credibility to advocacy efforts.
8. **Monitoring and Feedback:** Social media allows advocates to gauge public sentiment, track discussions around issues, and gather feedback, which can inform advocacy strategies and messaging.
9. **Resource Sharing:** Advocates can share resources such as articles, research findings, and toolkits directly with their audience, enhancing the overall effectiveness of their advocacy efforts.

By leveraging these aspects of social media, advocates can create a dynamic and responsive platform for driving change and influencing public policy.