

Moving Upstream to Transform  
Communities: How to advocate for policy  
solutions

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Advocacy 101

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# WHAT IS ADVOCACY? USING YOUR VOICE!

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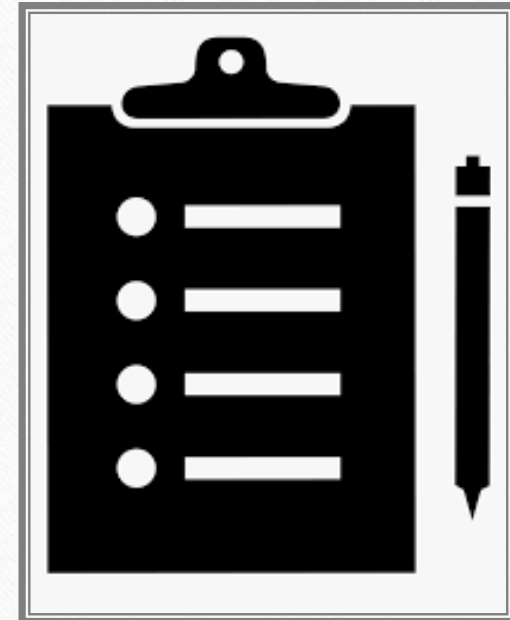
- If you have ever
  - Spoken up about something that wasn't right to get it fixed or
  - Spoken up to stop something from happening that would be harmful
- Then you're an advocate!
- Advocacy is speaking in support of or in opposition to a cause, policy or issue with people who have the power to do something about it.



# A QUICK SURVEY

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- Please type into the chat which of the following best describes your level of knowledge re: advocacy
  - Beginner
  - Basic
  - Intermediate
  - Advanced
  - Expert

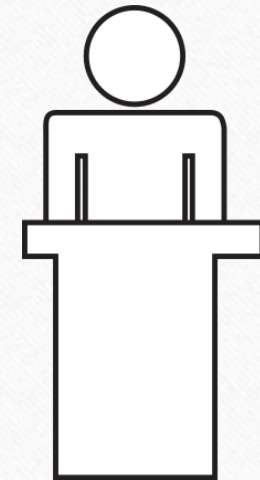
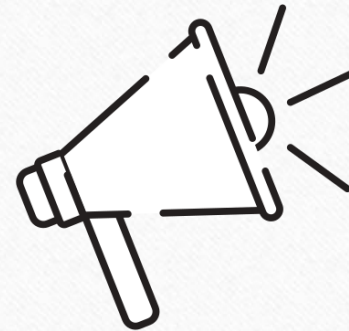




# COMMON ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

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- Communicating with legislators
  - Grassroots lobbying
  - Direct lobbying
- Communicating with other decisionmakers
- Letters, calls, meetings, public demonstrations
- Press coverage
  - Earned media, op-eds, letters to the editor
- Social media



# What's persuasive?

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## Do This:

- Storytelling
- Relationships
- Concise arguments

## Not that:

- Being a policy wonk with too many statistics

# Breakout Discussion #1

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What messages have you seen that were persuasive? What made them so?

## Does communicating with elected officials & candidates ever work?

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- Yes!
- Survey says constituents have more power than lobbyists





# COMMUNICATING WITH DECISIONMAKERS

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- Build a relationship and connect with elected representative
- Persuasion, persuasion, persuasion!!
- Storytelling, relationships, concise arguments
- Talking with representatives DOES work, and they especially listen during elections. WE hold the power!
- Telling your story

Make it personal.  
“I” statements

Focus on heart, not  
the head

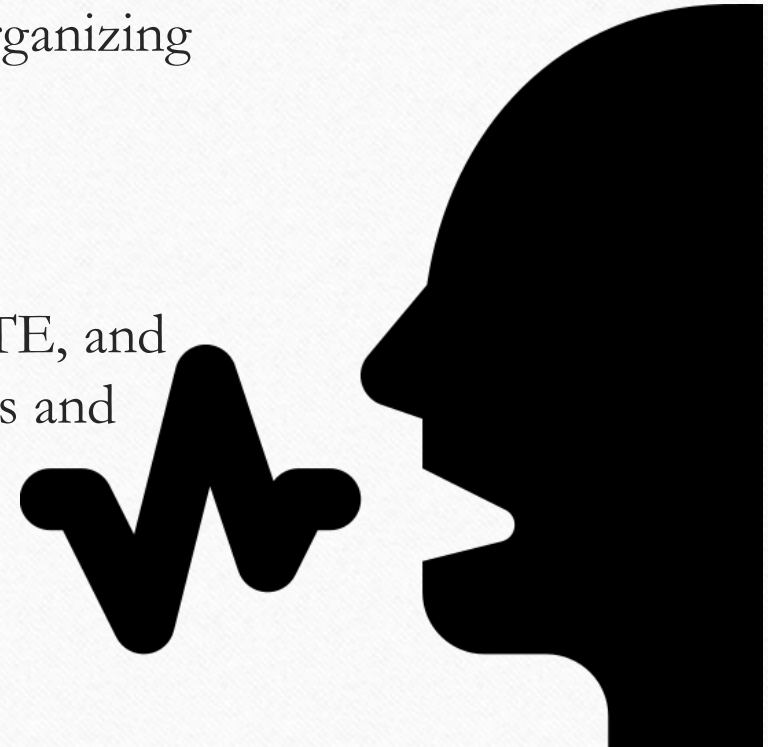
Include a shared  
moral or value

Make a single ask,  
don't demand too  
much

# STORIES

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- Stories are the most compelling content for digital organizing
- Should be empowering not exploitive
- Numbers don't win people's hearts
- Firsthand storytelling can happen through op-eds, LTE, and social media accounts and can be amplified by groups and organizations
- Example: Katie Beckett waiver



# WAYS TO CONTACT REPRESENTATIVES

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## Phone calls

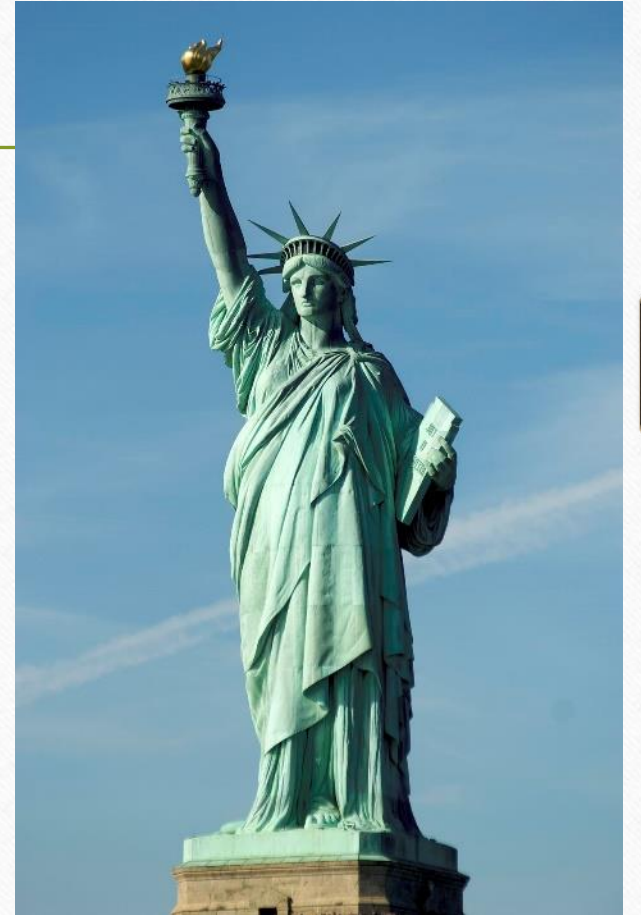
- Be respectful, and explain you are a constituent
- Explain your personal story
- Keep it simple

## Letters and Emails

- Outline the concern; clearly state the topic at the beginning
- Explain why it is important to the community
- Request an action: “as a concerned constituent, I urge you to support/oppose [X]”
- Sign your name and give your address

# VALUE-BASED MESSAGING

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# DECISIONMAKER NOT AGREEING?

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- LISTEN!!
- Acknowledge complaint or disagreement and provide real information
- Find lowest common denominator to achieve best result
- Share real experiences and stories
- Don't give up!



TIP: Even if you do not successfully move them to your side, you may reduce the intensity of their opposition and deter them from working hard against you. This can be crucial!

# Breakout Discussion #2

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What values might resonate with the decisionmakers in your advocacy?

# THE BIG PICTURE

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- People speaking out in local districts matter
  - Candidates are listening before elections
  - Even hearing from one person can make a difference!
  - Don't sleep on school board meetings
- Local newspaper
  - Elected officials read it!
  - Visit their website (or call) to find out how to submit an op-ed or LTE
  - Build relationships with reporters



# MEDIA COVERAGE

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- Earned media
- Op-eds (opinion editorials)
  - 300-500 words to show an expertise on a timely topic
  - Usually require a headshot and short bio
- LTEs (letters to the editor)
  - 250 words or less
  - One of the most frequently read sections in the newspaper
  - Can either respond to timely news/topic or can show editors what readers will be interested in, leading them to cover it



# MORE ABOUT MEDIA COVERAGE

## Call-in radio shows

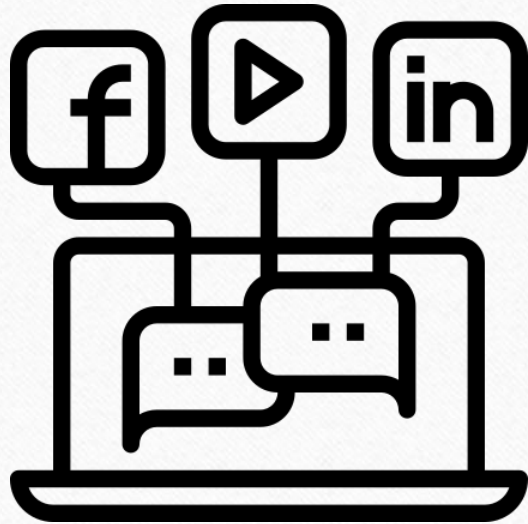
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- Depend on where you live and target audience
- Before you call
  - Make notes
  - Review notes
- Call early
- Know what you want to say
- Be aware of the delay
- While on-air, stay focused and calm
- Do not argue or sound angry



# DIGITAL ORGANIZING

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- Facebook: Older users; easiest tool for organizing
- Instagram: Younger users; photo driven
- Twitter: High volume of posts, best for connecting with reporters, followings news trends, and posting breaking news

# FACEBOOK



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- Private Facebook groups
    - Good way to connect local groups of people who are passionate about a certain issue
  - Videos/Facebook Live
    - Videos go further than other posts but keep them short!
    - Facebook live for longer events
  - Other posts
    - Photos, photos, photos! Especially of people's faces
    - Create a shareable image using a free account on Canva
  - Sharing posts and getting others to share



# INSTAGRAM

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- Great for sharing photos, short videos, and telling stories
- Post no more than once a day
- Can easily link your Instagram to Facebook
- Not good for links, except on Instagram Stories
  - They expire, so save them to your Highlights if you would like them to stay on your profile

# TWITTER

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- Live tweet events
  - If you have written talking points or received drafts of your speaker's remarks, you can use these drafts ahead of time and add photos later
- The shorter the better and include photo and video if possible
- Use hashtags that are popular
- Tag accounts if relevant

# Elements of an advocacy campaign plan

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- Clearly defined problem
- Attainable **policy** that could solve the problem or potentially bring progress
- Effective advocates
- Messaging
- Communication channel to decisionmaker(s)
- Strategies
- Clearly defined goals

# Large Group Discussion

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How to Create an Advocacy Campaign Plan