



# Advocacy 101

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Increase your confidence and effectiveness  
when advocating for yourself or other  
members of the brain injury community!

Many people are intimidated and are unsure about what to expect when participating in a policy meeting with lawmakers.

Follow these tips, prepare, and remember, lawmakers exist to represent the interests of their constituency in the most accurate way possible.



# Understand your audience and the historical context of your issue.

- Research the legislator you're meeting with.
- Understand the law and its strengths and weaknesses.
- Explain what is wrong with the law.
- Reference prior history of the lawmaker with the issue or like issues.

## Be prepared to articulate policy goals in a limited amount of time.

- Prepare to state the most important aspects of your issue within 10 minutes, anything further is a bonus!
- Mention your “hook” early, ex. Insurance coverage of rehabilitation is needed for people with brain injury so that they can once again become independent (not dependent on long-term care), **saving the government money.**

## Avoid common pitfalls in addressing lawmakers.

- Stay focused, discuss one topic at a time.
- Be prepared to ask the legislator to do something that would advance your cause, but also something that's realistic and easy for them to accomplish.
- Keep personal stories short and make sure that they demonstrate a positive impact .

# Understand that supporting policy change is not always cut and dry.

- Public policy is proposed, debated, modified and adopted in a political environment.
- "Tools of the trade" include use of:
  - Power
  - Self-Interest
  - Politics
  - Compromise of Positions, Not Principles

# Understand the needs of policymakers and their staff.

## Policymakers

- Self-Interest (re-election, power, status among peers and interest groups).
- Balancing priorities (Time pressures).
- Political Implications.
- Dependent on others for advice.





## Staff

- Promote and protect boss.
- Help in sorting through avalanche of inputs to determine what is important.
- Help develop assumptions and present fiscal and program estimates.
- Help in identifying key players.
- Help in developing viable policy options, drafting bills, report language, floor statements, speeches.
- Help in developing political strategy.



# Understand the importance of long-term relationships.

Develop long-term trust relationships to maximize influence.

- Always follow up a meeting with a thank you note.
- Engage in conversations periodically without asking for help with an issue.
- Work towards being known as a credible brain injury source.
- Be careful to always seem reasonable and not to overstay your welcome.

# Recognize your strengths and limitations.

- Keep your eye on the prize--put ego aside.
- Don't agree to a policy option when not fully knowledgeable.
- Don't agree to a policy option on behalf of others who you don't represent.

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