So You Wanna Be An Advocate...?????
“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; Indeed it’s the only thing that ever has”

- Margaret Mead
Getting Started
Key Words

**Advocate:** One that pleads the cause of another.

(Source: Webster’s Dictionary)
Key Words

Lobby: To conduct activities aimed at influencing public officials and especially members of a legislative body on legislation.

(Source: Webster’s Dictionary)
Bill: The form in which a proposal to create, change or abolish a law is introduced into the legislature.

(Source: Webster’s Dictionary)
Key Words

**Policy:** A high-level overall plan embracing the general goals and acceptable procedures especially of a governmental body.

(Source: Webster’s Dictionary)
10 Rules of Legislative Advocacy
1. Play Nice in the Sandbox

Know the difference between the terms "advocate" and "adversary"

Be the former
Play Nice…

- **Advocate:** One that pleads the cause of another

- **Adversary:** One that contends with, opposes or resists; enemy
2. Know the Law!

- 501(c)(3) Lobbying---influencing the outcome of legislation, is lawful. Political activity “influencing the outcome of an election” is not

- Check the laws in your state on lobbyist registration and follow them

- Educate and inform
3. Know What you Want to Accomplish with your Actions

- Identify your outcome

- Insure that the steps you are committed to taking will lead you from A to Z

- Insure that your action does what it is intended to do
4. Don’t Reinvent the Wheel

• If you are drafting legislation, research your idea and speak with those who have paved the way

• Collect existing resources to help you in your effort
5. Don’t be a Loner

- Build coalitions
- Collaborate with similar organizations
- Build grassroots support
- Enlist help from legislative staff
- Talk to other advocates and lobbyists
- Get support/feedback from relevant state agencies
6. Know the Process

• Know how a bill becomes a law in your state

• Understand that process and practices vary from state to state and between state and federal governments

• Take the time to get to know informal practices

• Understand what you do and do not need legislation to change in your state
7. Make it a Year-long Process

• Legislative advocacy does not begin with the legislative session

• Start as early as possible
8. Identify the Players

- Know your majority party
- Become familiar with Committee Chairs
- Identify and meet Legislative staff
- Learn your State Departments/Agencies, in particular your designated state agency
- Keep an eye on the Executive
9. Always Tell the Truth!

• Commit to getting answers

• Don’t overstate your influence
10. Be Grateful!

• Be kind and courteous in all you do

• Say thanks when you are through regardless of outcome