Arts Advocacy Tool Kit

advocate (ad'va kat) To speak in favor of: recommend. - n. A person who argues for a cause

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Dear Arts Supporter,

Thank you for your support of the arts!

Americans for the Arts is the leading nonprofit organization for advancing the arts in America. With more than 45 years of service and a network of more than 100,000 organizations and individual members and stakeholders across the country, it is dedicated to representing and serving states and local communities to create opportunities for every American to participate in and appreciate all forms of the arts. Further, Americans for the Arts works to ensure that all children have access to a robust arts education.

This Advocacy Handbook has been prepared to give you an overview of general advocacy principles, lobbying activities, do’s and don’ts, and other useful information. This handbook should be used as a guide and should be seen as a starting place to customize your own specific activities.

This information was primarily gathered from members of Americans for the Arts’ State Arts Action Network (SAAN). SAAN members possess a great wealth of knowledge in the field of arts advocacy and providing services and are seen as the primary resource for this type of information. SAAN membership is limited to statewide, multidiscipline, arts advocacy and/or service organizations. Generally, each state has one such organization.

As you read through this book, you will see attributions to various SAAN members who contributed to this handbook. You are strongly encouraged to contact me at jay@artsusa.org or the individual SAAN member with any questions.

Best regards,

Jay H. Dick
Director of State & Local Government Affairs
Get Involved in Arts Advocacy

From the Washington State Arts Alliance Advocacy Handbook

Individuals and organizations have the right (in fact, the duty) to participate in the legislative process. Independent Sector, a national leadership forum "working to encourage giving, volunteering, not-for-profit initiative, and citizen action", says there are three primary reasons why it's necessary to lobby for issues, which are important to you.

- **First**, government affects every aspect of our lives;
- **Second**, in a democracy, government responds to the wishes of the people; and
- **Third**, if you don't lobby, remember someone else with a different viewpoint or cause will.

*Before you begin, however, consider the following:*

As an Individual American Citizen you CAN:

- **Contribute** money to candidates of your choice (Many states have limits on amounts).
- **Invite your friends** to an arts fund-raiser/coffee party for a candidate at your home.
- **Volunteer** to work on a candidate's campaign.

You CANNOT:

- **Participate in these campaign activities as an employee** of your organization. It is okay to educate legislators about the arts as part of your workday, but it is NOT okay to help their election efforts during your workday.

Advocacy Basics

From the Arts Wisconsin Arts Advocacy Handbook

*Constituent-to-Elected Official is the Most Effective Form of Advocacy.*

- The process
  - Position or belief is made public
  - Compelling case for the position is made
  - A decision maker considers the case
  - The position is adopted
  - The decision maker’s behavior or belief changes
- Organizations should adopt an advocacy policy
- Define outcome and establish a plan of action
- Seek technical assistance/facilitator help from your organization
Form an Advocacy Committee
- Committee of a Board – keep full Board informed at all meetings
- Groups of artists, teachers, parents, volunteers can form advocacy committees
- Conduct a “political assessment” (who knows who)

Identify People/Issues
- Know who represents you – go to www.capwiz.com/artsusa; then click on “Your state”
- Know major contributors/friends – put them on your committee
- Talk to candidates before they are elected
- Send an individual contribution or work on campaigns
- Conduct candidate surveys – get the candidate to “go public” on what they think
- Represent the arts at public forums with prepared questions
- Define and remain updated on other issues that affect the arts beyond public funding (i.e. community appearance, downtown development, educational policy).

Establish Intentional & Sustaining Relationships
- The best time to establish a relationship with an elected official is BEFORE you have a request.
- A face-to-face meeting is the most effective form of communication, followed by a letter or fax, with an increasing preference for email. Phone calls are also effective. The form of communication will often be influenced by the timing of the issue.
- Keep all elected officials on all mailing list, but target specific occasions for personal and specific invitations
- Organize visibility events
- A spouse or family member involved in the arts may be your best contact
- Know the support staff
- Always thank the decision-maker – find points of understanding and appreciation
- Know their personal “arts” history, their issues and experiences.

Create the Message
- Must be articulate, informative, and brief
- Must address the personal background and issues of the individual
- Use both factual and anecdotal data – provide the elected official with quality information to allow him/her to be well prepared to position your request
- Learn to be communicators – informed, organized, passionate
- Be specific about what you want them to do

Good Practice
- Set appointments in advance, be punctual and patient
- Use informal opportunities – introduce yourself
- Be connected in other ways in your community
- Always answer an unanswered question—respond after the meeting with the answer
- If you find your appointment canceled, come prepared to leave materials and a personal note
- Include your home address whenever possible to verify that you are a constituent.
Do's and Don'ts of Advocacy

- **DO be informed.** Read newsletters and legislative/advocacy alerts carefully. Know both sides of the issues. Know when the bill is in committee, when the hearings will be held, who the co-sponsors are, etc.
- **DO start early.** Pay attention to issues and proposals early in the process and you'll have a better chance of affecting the outcome.
- **DO be concise.** The more simply and clearly your position can be explained, the better chance you have of getting people to listen and respond.
- **DO be specific.** Know exactly what you want your legislator to do. Do you want him/her to draft legislation? Propose an amendment? Vote for the bill?
- **DO be honest.** Don't exaggerate to make a point or answer a question if you're not sure of the facts. Every issue has at least two sides - be honest about admitting the pros and cons of your issue.
- **DO give personal examples.** This puts the issues in memorable, human terms. Saying that you or a family member went without dinner for a week because there wasn't enough money to buy food is much more powerful story than a statistic.
- **DO practice.** Try explaining your position to friends and family before you meet with a legislator or testify before a committee.
- **DO communicate with the statewide arts advocacy/service organization or your legislative network contact.** Tell them what your legislators say so follow-up action can be planned.
- **DO be courteous, but firm and confident.**
- **DON'T make threats.** Telling legislators that they have to do what you want or you won't vote for them will only turn people off.
- **DON'T argue with your legislator.** If it is clear that the person won't support your position, just give the facts and ask him or her to consider your viewpoint.
- **DON'T GIVE UP!**
Political Do’s and Don'ts for Non-Profit Organizations

Some would argue that charitable 501(c)(3) organizations such as statewide advocacy organizations are the “sleeping giants” of the democratic process. These community organizations have credibility, trust, and access to potential voters who are often disengaged from the electoral process. As such, they can be the catalyst for a dramatic increase in voter participation through legal, permissible, nonpartisan voter mobilization activities—voter registration, voter education, and get-out-the-vote (GOTV).

The following information is a basic overview of what is and is not permissible voter mobilization activity for 501 (c)(3) nonprofits.

Things you **CAN** do as a 501(c)(3) organization:

- Conduct voter registration and nonpartisan get-out-the-vote (“GOTV”) efforts.
  - Drives must be designed to educate the public about the importance of voting.
  - Activities cannot be biased for or against any candidate or party.
  - Nonprofits can target areas in nonpartisan ways. For instance, nonprofits may target low-turnout areas, low-income populations, minority populations, and students.
  - Nonprofits may target registration and turnout efforts to the areas or people they serve.
- Educate the public on issues and encourage participation in the political process.
- Educate all candidates and political parties on your issues.
- Conduct or participate in a nonpartisan candidate forum. The forum must be open to all candidates, be run in a balanced way, and include a broad range of nonpartisan questions for the candidates.
- Make presentations on your organization’s issue to platform committees, campaign staff, candidates, media, and the general public.
- Work on behalf of a ballot measure.
- Continue your normal lobbying on issues.
- Rent or sell mailing lists to candidates at fair market value, if made available to all candidates.

Things you **CANNOT** do as a 501(c)(3) organization:

These restrictions in no way prohibit officers, members, or employees from participating in a political campaign as private citizens.

- Endorse or oppose a candidate—implicit or explicit. Contribute money, time, or facilities to a candidate.
- Coordinate activities with a candidate.
- Restrict rental of your mailing list and facilities to certain candidates.
- Set up, fund, or manage a Political Action Committee (PAC), established under section 527 of the tax code mainly for electoral activity.

(Source: Minnesota Participation Project, Minnesota Council of Nonprofits)
Make Advocacy a Habit

From the Washington State Arts Alliance Advocacy Handbook

*With a very manageable amount of effort, you and others in your organization can make a difference for arts and culture in your state.*

As a General Rule You Should:

- **Put elected officials** on your mailing list, PR list and VIP list.
- **Ask for a letter of support** from local legislators when applying for a grant.
- **Send press releases** to your local media when you receive a government grant.
- **Write a thank you note** to the appropriate elected officials when you receive a government grant.
- **Inform your constituency** that your event or facility was made possible in part through public funds and encourage them, audiences, patrons, volunteers, students, etc., to send thank-you letters to elected officials.
- **Write appropriate elected officials** when, due to a lack of available funds, you do not receive a grant or receive a grant that is much lower than requested. Request that they increase public investment in arts and culture so that projects like yours can be funded in the future. **STAY POSITIVE**, but let them know what you would have been able to do for your community had you received the funds.

Once a Month Invite an Elected Official to Do One of the Following:

- **Tour your facility** and educate them about your programs and how they benefit the community.
- **Speak about** the legislative process or other government processes at a meeting of your board of directors or membership.
- **Speak** at dedications, community celebrations, etc. Don't forget the press releases. Take photos and display them.
- **Attend celebratory gatherings** including opening nights, and any pre or post publicity events of shows, previews, openings, exhibits or displays.
- **Perform a walk-on role** for a performance of a holiday show.
- **Meet with a group of constituents** in her/his district office to talk about the arts and or arts education.
- **Display artwork** of local artists in his or her office. Volunteer to find artwork to loan them for their office in Cheyenne during the session.
Be an Active Participant in the Statewide Advocacy Network:

- Inform your statewide advocacy/service organization of exciting new advocacy activities so they share them with other advocates.
- Sign up for your statewide advocacy/service organization’s action alert list and take action when contacted.
- Appoint an "Advocacy Point Person" for your organization or school who will take responsibility for keeping board and staff informed on political activity affecting the arts.
- Report the name and contact information of your Advocacy Point Person to the statewide advocacy/service organization.
- Become a dues paying member of your statewide advocacy/service organization to support both the grassroots advocacy activities and the direct lobbying efforts of the organization. The sole support for these efforts is membership dues.

Advocacy is an ongoing activity. Every election brings new elected officials with new agendas. Arts advocates must continue to educate and inform.

Communicating with Elected Officials

From the Washington State Arts Alliance Advocacy Handbook

Writing, calling and meeting are all effective means of getting your message across to your legislators. Legislators are impressed when they receive just five "hits" on one topic because most people don't bother to take the time to tell them what they think. Legislators are even more impressed when the messages come from the people who live in their own voting district. Your message can change the way they vote.

Delivering the Message

- Writing reminds your elected officials that their decisions have a direct impact on you, their constituent. Postal service, e-mail, and faxing are alternative ways of delivering letters to your legislators; the same rules of etiquette and clarity apply.
- Calling is a very effective way to contact elected officials when you must get your message across quickly.
- Meetings with elected officials are a key element in your advocacy efforts. Legislators and other elected officials have busy schedules so it is important to get your message across quickly. Remember legislators often have more time to meet with constituents when the legislature is not in session and they are in their home districts.
When Writing Elected Officials

**DO:**
- **Use the correct** address and salutation, e.g., Dear Senator (name), or Dear Representative (name), or Dear Governor (name).
- **Type or write your letter clearly.** If your letter is not easy to read, it could be discarded. Be sure to include your return address in the letter or e-mail.
- **State your position** in the first sentence (or subject line on an e-mail). Keep your message focused.
- **Be brief**, but include enough information to explain why you are writing.
- **Use your own words** and stationery. Legislators feel that personal letters, rather than form letters, show greater personal commitment on the part of the writer, and therefore carry greater weight.
- **Be specific.** If possible, give an example of how the issue affects your district.
- **Know your facts.** It is important to be accurate and honest in your letter. You can seriously hurt your credibility by offering inaccurate or misleading information. If you can, find out how your legislators voted on this issue or similar issues in the past.
- **Be timely.** Contact your legislator while there is time for him/her to consider and act on your request. Respond quickly to action alerts.
- **Be persistent.** Do not be satisfied with responding letters that give a status report on the bill, promise to "keep your views in mind," or otherwise skirt the issue. Without being rude, write back and ask for a more specific response.
- **Say thank you.** Everyone appreciates a pat on the back. If, however, your legislator did not support your position, let him/her know that you are aware of that, and explain why you think he/she should have decided differently. It might make a difference next time.

**DON'T:**
- **Use a negative**, condescending, threatening or intimidating tone. You will only alienate your legislator and cause bad feelings that will hurt your case.

When Calling Elected Officials

**DO:**
- **Ask to speak** with the aide handling your issue. The aides have the legislator's ear, and are often very knowledgeable about the details of your issue. Be sure to take down the name of the aide with whom you spoke in case you need to contact the legislator again. You will also have the name of another person to thank.
- **Know what you want to say** and BE BRIEF. Use your time wisely and get your main points covered as close to the beginning of the conversation as possible.
- **Leave your name,** address and telephone number. This will enable the aide to get back to you with information on the legislator's position. Let him/her know that you want a reply.
- **Follow up** your phone call with a brief note of thanks for the conversation, a concise summary of your position, and additional information if it has been requested.
DON'T:
- **Bluff.** If the legislator or aide asks you a question that you cannot answer, say that you will get back to him/her and then do the appropriate follow up.

**When Meeting With Elected Officials**

**DO:**
- **Call first** for an appointment. Explain the purpose of your visit.
- **Be respectfully** tenacious and do not get discouraged. Legislators have a lot of things competing for their time. Set up a meeting with your legislator at his or her legislative office. If your legislator is unable to meet with you, schedule an appointment with the aide handling the issue.
- **Arrive early,** but be ready to wait.
- **Be Prepared.** What are your top 3 issues and be prepared to talk about them. Do your homework! Be ready to explain the issue in simple terms in case the decision maker in not familiar with the issue. Bring written background information including your contact information and leave it with them.
- **Be Political.** Demonstrate how this helps your state or the legislative district. Demonstrate how this will make the decision maker look good to the public.
- **Be articulate.** The meeting should be brief and concise. If you are with a group of people, you may want to designate one spokesperson.
- **Be direct** by asking at the end of the meeting, "Will you support my cause?" His or her answer will help determine your future advocacy efforts. The biggest error someone makes when meeting with their elected official is that they don’t specifically “make the ask.” Don’t ever assume your member is on your side. Always ask the question, will you vote for this? Do you support this? Etc. They might not always want to answer your question, but always ask and be persistent.
- **Write a thank-you** letter promptly after your meeting.

DON'T:
- **Drop in** or show up unannounced.
- **Assail** those individuals or organizations that oppose your issue. Attacking a legislator can only hinder your efforts.
Working with Your Legislators

From the Arts for Colorado Advocacy Primer

Advocacy is a process of communicating and building relationships with legislators. Lobbying state and national political leaders is an ongoing process of building trust between elected officials and constituents. The more your legislator trusts you, the greater your credibility with them. The greater your credibility the greater impact your advocacy message will have on your legislator. Therefore, the better the relationship, the more successful your lobbying will be.

Start building the relationship with your political representatives before a crisis develops. Be proactive rather than reactive. Contact your elected officials when they do something you like as well as when they do something you dislike.

Sending a Letter or E-mail to your Legislator

Writing a letter or an email to your Senator or Representative can be an effective way to influence legislation or a legislative position. Visit www.capwiz.com/artsusa and click on any of the federal action alerts at the top of the page. To contact your state elected officials, click on drop down box on “state officials” and select your state. If you don’t remember your legislator’s name or address, don’t worry as the system will quickly locate your and give you their phone and email addresses.

During the legislative session, one of the best methods of contacting your representative is to send an email. They will take the time to read these, and frequent contact by you will allow your representative to recognize your name.

Tips on writing an email or letter to your Legislator (see sample letters later in this document)

• If you are a constituent of the Legislator, note this early in your message (i.e., “as a resident of ____________ for ____________ years”).
• Make sure your note has a personal touch. Use your own words and include how the arts (or particular legislation) impact the quality of your life.
• Introduce yourself and explain and identify what coalition you belong to.
• If referring to a bill or policy, identify it by its name or number. Focus on a single issue.
• State your position clearly, and express the action you want your legislator to take. Repeat this again near the end of the message, in slightly different words.
• Explain what the bill does, in specific terms.
• Mention other groups that support the legislation.
• Express how the legislation will affect you and others who might share your views.
• Thank them for hearing your view and ask the legislator how they will vote. Include your name, address, and telephone number, with an invitation to contact you for additional information.
• Be confident in yourself and in your own experiences.
• When you receive a reply, make sure the “Will you support this legislation?” question is answered to your satisfaction. If not, write another letter seeking how the official will vote.

Between sessions, a letter to the Legislator’s home district office can be effective. If you prefer to write a letter during the session, send letters directly to the State Capitol:

Senator or Representative ___________
ADDRESS
City, ST XXXXX

Making a Phone Call to your Legislator

When the legislature is in session, you can call your legislator directly. If you don’t know your legislator’s phone number, you can look it up at www.capwiz.com/artsusa

It is not always possible to speak directly to your legislator or a top legislative assistant. Any staff person who answers the phone will pass along your message.

Tips on calling your legislator
• Plan the call in advance to be able to be brief in order to get your message across.
• Introduce yourself by name and hometown. Always be polite and provide your address.
• Identify the bill you wish to talk about by name and number.
• Briefly state your position, your reasoning, and how you wish your legislator to vote.
• Ask for your legislator's stance on the issue and for a commitment to vote for your position.
• Don't argue if your legislator has an opposing view or hasn't yet decided.
• If your legislator needs addition information, supply it as quickly as possible.
• Pause occasionally to let your legislator speak.

Advocating in Person
Legislators welcome visits from constituents. Remember, however, that they are busy. Plan ahead and use your time well. Meeting with an aide can also be effective if a legislator is unavailable.
Tips for meeting with legislators

- Make it as easy as possible for your legislator to meet with you by accommodating her/his schedule and by setting an appointment in advance.
- Expect only 15 minutes for your meeting. Be prepared and be on time.
- Try to learn in advance where your legislator stands on an issue.
- Don't be surprised if your legislator isn't informed on your issue. You are there to educate them.
- Be prepared to explain how the bill will affect you and others in the legislator's district.
- Practice before hand what you want to say. This will help you be more articulate and to come right to the point.
- If you don't know the answer to a question, be honest. Admit you don't know but will find out and get back to them with the answer.
- Before you leave, ask how you can be of help to them and offer to provide additional information.
- Practice a short 2-minute "elevator" speech that explains your issue clearly and to the point. Be prepared to give this statement to anyone who will listen. (See the sample elevator speech in this handbook.)
- After the meeting, write a brief thank you note to the office-holder.

Other ways to involve policy makers in the arts

- Have your elected officials visit your facility. During the tour, educate them about what you do and about the value you provide to the community (their constituents).
- Ask your elected officials to speak at arts and culture functions in your community. Issue a press release to increase attendance. Take and display photos and send copies to elected official.
- Invite elected officials to opening night receptions where they can mingle with their constituents. Also invite them to any related publicity events.
- Offer an elected official the opportunity of a walk-on role in a performance or holiday show.
- Invite an elected official to attend one of your organizational meetings to speak about the legislative process in your state.
- If you receive state arts council grants, send a note about this to your Legislators.

Advocating by Writing a Letter to the Editor

From the Arts for Colorado Advocacy Primer

Writing a letter to the editor of your local newspaper is an excellent way to bring visibility to arts and culture issues. The time and effort you spend writing shows your concern for the quality of life in your state. Keeping arts and culture issues constantly in front of the public sends the message that these issues are important. Your letter will educate the community, media, and voters about the importance of supporting the arts in your state.
Tips for writing a successful letter

- Go to www.capwiz.com/artsusa and click on Media to get a list of all the publications in your state to submit electronic letters to the editor.
- You can also check the editorial page of your local newspaper to learn how to submit a letter to the editor. Perhaps the easiest way is in the form of an e-mail, but note that some papers won't accept attachments.
- Most papers encourage letters of 200 - 250 words. If you want to write a more in-depth op-ed piece, expect to write 800 - 1000 words. You can e-mail or call the editorial desk for more information about op-ed requirements.
- The goal of the letter or op-ed piece is to express your opinion about a current arts and cultural issue. Describe why it is important to you and to the community. Cite your own experience.
- Use short sentences and write in the active voice. Avoid using the passive voice - for example: don't say: must be, should be, will be, to be, are shown, and is presented.
- Include your name, address, and phone number on the typed letter. Someone from the newspaper will usually contact you before printing your letter. A phone call to the editorial desk inquiring if they received your letter and if they have any questions about its content can increase the chances of your letter being printed.
- If responding to a previously written letter or article, send your letter as soon as possible. Be sure to reference the title or author, and date of the original article.
- Keep reading the editorial page after your letter is printed to see what responses your comments generated. This is often a good time for another proactive arts advocate to write a letter of support.
- If your letter isn't printed, keep trying. Don't get discouraged; persistence is the key to success.
Tips for Effective Advocacy & Sample Documents

From the Arts for Colorado Advocacy Primer

- Establish a list with the mailing address, telephone number, and e-mail address of each of your elected officials.
- Get to know your legislator before you need to ask for something. Learn their interests, politics and background. Start building relationship by volunteering time to help with current issues.
- Remember that your issue is not the only one in front of the legislator. They may not be familiar with arts and culture issues. Your task is to educate them on arts and cultural issues and to explain the values arts and culture adds to your life and to the community as a whole.
- Target your message. Use data to help your legislators better understand how their decisions on arts issues affect the citizens in their district.
- Give your legislator a clear message about what needs to happen next to improve the condition of arts and culture in the community. You might request they vote for or against a specific bill, or to introduce legislation to address a certain problem.
- Include the governor’s office in your advocacy efforts. Veto power makes the governor a key player.
- Concisely present your position in a way that shows how it will help in the legislator’s district. Use relevant data and address the legislator’s concerns directly; try to anticipate questions and be prepared to answer them.
- Follow up a visit or a phone call with a thank you letter. Always be non-partisan.
- Take notes.
- Be respectful and diplomatic and never argue with your legislator. Maintain a professional demeanor. Listen intently to your legislator’s comments. Always speak the truth and stay positive.
- Always remember, you are dealing with multiple issues, perspectives and personalities. Be gracious in victory and in defeat because today’s opponent may become an ally in the future.
Sample Documents

2008 Legislative Elevator Speech

From Virginians for the Arts

(The following is a short “elevator speech” that can be used as a guide to create your own speech.)

It is a long-standing goal of the General Assembly to fund the grant programs of the Virginia Commission for the Arts at a dollar per citizen of the Commonwealth.

The General Assembly supports arts and culture in three ways - through the state-owned and operated museums, through grants to nonstate agencies, and through the Virginia Commission for the Arts.

All of this support is important, but the Virginia Commission for the Arts is the only entity concerned about developing the arts industry as a whole and about making the arts available in all parts of the Commonwealth. Last year the Commission helped to make possible 24,300 arts events attended by over 8 million people, including 3.2 million school children.

The arts organizations funded by the Commission strengthen the work of Virginia teachers through educational programs that address the state Standards of Learning.

We urge your support for $1.6 million in additional funding for arts grants through the Virginia Commission for the Arts in the 2008-2010 biennium.

Importance of Public Hearings

From Virginians for the Arts Advocacy Handbook

Many General Assembly holds public hearings on state budget annually. These hearings are at different locations around the state each year.

It is essential that the arts be represented at these hearings. After hearing hundreds of speakers the legislators may not appear to be paying attention, but they are keenly aware of the issues raised at these hearings.

Rules vary from state to state, but often all you must do is to sign up to speak beginning about two hours before each hearing, and the speakers are in the order in which they signed up.
You probably will only have a few minutes to speak so be concise and to the point.

Be specific about what you are asking. How does funding from the state Arts Council/Commission make a difference in your community? Include both statistics and human interest stories, but remember that you will only have a few minutes.

Be sure to thank the legislators for their support of the arts in the past.

**Arts Advocacy Days**

*From Virginians for the Arts Advocacy Handbook*

Arts Advocacy Day at the State Capitol is an excellent opportunity to reinforce the message that you have given to your elected representatives prior to the Legislative session.

Having several hundred people walking around the Capitol with lapel stickers identifying them as art supporters has a big impact with the legislators. The number of people attending Arts Advocacy Day matters.

Contact your delegates and senators in advance to ask for an appointment on Arts Advocacy Day. You should arrange for an appointment even if you have already met with a particular legislator at home.

Do not be concerned if you end up meeting with your legislator's aide. The aides will be sure that the legislators know of your visit and your concerns.

If you cannot arrange appointments for that day, it is still important to stop by their offices in the capitol to let them know that you have made the trip in support of funding for the arts.

Bring posters, brochures, and other information about your organization to leave with your legislators.

Have a position sheet, prepared by you or the statewide advocacy/service organization, to leave with each legislator with your card.

Be sure to pick up a lapel sticker or some other indicator that you are with Art Advocacy Day, and wear it all day. The stickers reinforce the message that hundreds of people came to town on behalf of the arts.

It is effective for groups of people to meet with the legislators if you can get together with others from your legislative district.

After you get home, write a letter thanking the legislator or aide for his or her time and repeating your key points. (see sample letter below.)
Sample letters

From the South Carolina Arts Alliance Advocacy Handbook

Sample Letter to your Legislator

(DATE)

The Honorable (Legislator’s Name)
State Senate OR House of Representatives
City, ST XXXXX OR City, ST XXXXX
(Also keep in mind that you can mail your letter to the district office)

Dear (Senator or Representative) (Last Name):

As your constituent, and a supporter of the (Organization Name), I urge you to (support/oppose) (descriptive title of legislation) (Bill number if possible).

(In your own words, describe what this legislation means to you. How would it affect your life, the lives of others, or the community? This paragraph should only be around three to five sentences. Basically, tell your own story.)

(Talk about what the piece of legislation would do in your opinion. For example, if the bill adds money to the Arts Council’s Budget, you could say that 15 more arts organizations would be able to receive grants of $5,000 which would be used to provide special arts education classes in local schools. Don’t be afraid to tell them what your community or schools will lack if this legislation does not pass.)

Thank you for your attention to the arts and your continued support. (Take this opportunity to invite your legislator to your next performance, student art exhibit, classroom, board meeting, etc.)

Sincerely,

(Name)
(Title, organization, if appropriate)
Sample Letter to Request an Appointment with Your Legislator

(DATE)

The Honorable (Legislator’s Name)
State Senate OR House of Representatives
City, ST XXXXX City, ST XXXXX
(Also keep in mind that you can mail your letter to the district office)

Dear (Senator or Representative) (Last Name):

As an advocate for the arts in your district, I would like the opportunity to meet with you to discuss that current state of affairs for the arts community in our district.

The arts have proven time and time again to not only provide a cultural boost to our communities, but reports have also shown that the creative industries can also propel local economies as well. For each dollar invested in the arts by a state or locality, the money is returned at least two times the investment.

I am very interested in hearing your opinion regarding the status of the arts in our community and it would be a pleasure to meet with you to discuss these important issues at your convenience.

Thank you for considering my request. I will contact your office within a few days to confirm a time for our appointment or I can be reached at (phone/email).

Sincerely,

(Name)
(Title, organization, if appropriate)
Sample Thank You Letter to Your Legislator

(DATE)

The Honorable (Legislator’s Name)
State Senate OR House of Representatives
City, ST XXXXX City, ST XXXXX
(Also keep in mind that you can mail your letter to the district office)

Dear (Senator or Representative) (Last Name):

Thank you again for taking the time to meet with me (last week, Thursday, etc) in your office (X Arts Center, school, etc). I greatly appreciated the opportunity to be able to discuss (legislative issue or bill title). As you remember, this legislation would (sentence or two on how it would help or hurt).

I would like to offer my assistance to you to help you craft your positions on arts related activities. I know that you are presented with thousands of different issues and it is impossible for you to gather and disseminate information on each of these topics. Therefore, when you are presented with legislation that deals with or affects the arts, please call upon me to give you an honest, non-partisan overview.

Thank you again for your time and I look forward to continuing to work with you on issues of common concern.

Sincerely,

(Name)
(Title, organization, if appropriate)
Reasons to Advocate: Some Benefits of Arts Funding

From the Arts for Colorado Advocacy Primer

**Economic Growth** – Cities and towns are finding that the arts and cultural heritage are an important economic development strategy.

**Youth Development** – Instruction in the arts, particularly when integrated into the curriculum, improves a young person’s chance of success as a student, critical thinker and problem-solver, and as a workforce member. Young people who participate in the arts are:
- 4 times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement.
- 3 times more likely to be elected to class office
- 3 times more likely to win an award for school attendance
- 4 times as often to perform community service

**Tourism** – A unique culture, interesting cities and towns, landmarks, historical areas, museums, and galleries are among the top motivators for getting on travelers’ destination wish lists. When compared to regular U.S. travelers, these cultural tourists:
- Spend more: $623 vs. $457
- Are a growing population of retirees and families
- Travel longer: 5.2 nights vs. 3.4 nights for other travelers
- Are more likely to make accommodations at a hotel, motel, or Bed & Breakfast

**Creative Industry** – The arts promote and develop innovative thinking and lead to the creation of new ideas, which are important factors in workforce development.
- Jobs in the creative industry – technology, intellectual property, architecture and design, publishing and writing, arts and entertainment – are booming and supplementing traditional jobs in manufacturing, agriculture, and mining.
- The arts foster the generation, development, and communication of new ideas and, therefore, directly connect to the development of skills needed in the new workplace.
- Jobs and employment in the creative industries are growing faster than the labor force as a whole and now make up 30% of the work force.
- American innovation has led to 70% more patents being issued than a decade ago.

**Community Building** – The arts can help build socially stronger communities:
Lobbying 101

From Americans for the Arts

Unfortunately, the word lobbying has a sinister connotation to it. When the general public thinks of lobbyists, they think of very high paid people who buy influence to legislators through fancy dinners, golf trips, etc. While this does occur, this is certainly not the norm.

The truth be told, lobbying is very important to legislative process. At any given time, a state legislator has thousands of potential pieces of legislation that they might have to vote on. How does that legislator gain an understanding of the legislation to be able to make an informed decision? One of the main ways is through lobbyists. Lobbyists provide needed expertise to educate elected officials.

You don’t have to be a professional government affairs person to be a lobbyist. In fact, everyone is/should be a lobbyist/ activist. Each person is an expert about at least one thing, their own life’s experiences. If you happen to be an artist or someone who values the arts, this is your area of expertise that you need to share with elected officials to help them make a better, more informed decision/vote.

Who are lobbyists?
ANYONE with an interest in a particular issue
ANYONE with a story to tell
ANYONE who wants to change the law or status quo

YOU are lobbyists/ activists
YOU all have a common interest
YOU all have been affected by the action of the federal, state and local governments with regard to its support for the arts.

Lobbying Goals
- Build professional relationships with key decision makers
- If you wait until you need help, it is too late
- Knowledge is power
- Become a resource or expert on your issue
- Offer your resources and assistance at any time
- For your supporters, volunteer on their election campaign

Lobbying Motto
Your success depends on how the key decision maker views you. Does he or she TRUST you, RESPECTS your opinions (not necessarily agrees with them), VALUES you as a person and, SEEKS YOUR ADVICE
Lobbying Rules
- Be HONEST, never lie or stretch the truth
- Must know your position
- Must know your opponent’s position
- Never insult the key decision maker
- Never insult your opponent
- Never lose your cool

Understand the key decision maker’s political position and how your issue might be difficult to adopt or maintain

Only lobby YOUR elected officials. You must be their constituent. The only exception is if you represent an organization that has members in their district that you can legitimately say you represent.

Meeting with key decision maker’s senior staff is often just as good as or better than meeting with the principle decision maker. Keep in mind, staff advice the elected official on how to vote. If you win over the staff, you probably have won over the elected official.
Grassroots Advocacy Tactics

From Minnesota Citizens for the Arts

Constituent & Elected Official Interaction:

- **Arts Advocacy Day** on the hill, bringing 1000 constituents to the capitol to meet with their legislators over the course of a single day – meetings are scheduled by MCA and constituents are steered to meetings with their own legislators. Constituents educate their elected official about their passion for the issue and the impact of the issue on the district and on the legislator’s constituents.

- **Coffee parties** in the districts of targeted legislators, bringing the elected official and constituents together in a friendly setting where the constituents educate their elected official about their passion for the issue and the impact of the issue on the district and on the legislator’s constituents.

- **Phone Banks** – Calling the constituents of targeted legislators in the weeks before an important decision at the Capitol, asking constituents to call their legislator ASAP.

- **Letter writing campaigns** – make it easy for the advocate by providing talking points (not form letters) or the advocate won’t do it.

- **Encourage advocates to get involved in campaigns** of the candidates/party of their choice, both volunteering and contributing.

- **Candidate Forums** – Recruit arts advocates to attend forums scheduled by others to ask arts questions of candidates while they are campaigning in the district.

- **Petitions** – used mostly as an advocate recruiting tool, hand delivered to legislator at important point during session.

Web-Based Advocacy has Dual Roles: Advocate Education/Communication with Legislators

- **Arts Alert** – timely, weekly or less email messages to advocates informing them about what’s going on and how they can help

- **Web site** offering educational information

- **Interactive web page** allowing advocate to find out who their elected officials are and how to contact them

- **Interactive web page** providing “Desktop Lobbyist” allowing the advocate to quickly compose and send a letter to their legislator on our hot issues

- The younger the advocate, the more likely they will want to do advocacy on line. However, nothing can substitute for the person-to person meetings.

- **Candidate Survey** – Used to educate candidates about our issues, responses are posted on web and also mailed to our membership.
Advocate Education and Development

- **Advocacy 101 classes** offered year-round, state-wide.
- **Advocacy handbook** provided via web.
- **Constituent meetings** held several times per year with peer groups – i.e. a meeting for individual artists, a meeting about getting involved during the election cycle, or a rally and training held on Arts Advocacy Day.
- **Arts Alerts** used as an educational tool

Snail Mail Tools

- **Annual postcard campaign** – biggest impact is recruiting new advocates. Postcard sets allow advocates to send a card to their Representatives, Senator, Governor and us. Expensive.
- **Newsletter** – used less and less because of cost, but can be a good tool for educating advocates.
- **Dues renewal Letters** – always include a description of the current political situation, what the advocate can do.

Other Advocate Recruiting Tools

- **Board structure**: Create an organization whose board reflects the geographic and political diversity you need to have influence on decision makers. Each board member should represent and bring with them a different constituency, resources and talent.
- **The 80/20 rule**: 20% of the advocates will do 80% of the work. Cultivate, educate, and support that 20%.
- **A consistent graphic identity and message**: Advocates learn to trust and understand your communications when you are consistent, clear, and reliable.
- **Campus Arts Advocates**: Our interns are recruiting Campus Art Advocates to get more students involved and to come to advocacy day.
- **List Building** - collect contact info. for everyone who participates in any way, continue to communicate with all, continually update the list. Get as many voices in your choir as possible, make that list your most important asset.

Targeting

- **Focus on decision makers**, not the whole world.
- **Focus on advocates with vested interests**, not the whole world.
- **Use limited resources to promote face to face interaction** when possible
- **Choose one or two key messages/issues**. Don’t confuse people with too much information. Make things easy to understand. Stick to a page or less.
- **Ask advocates to do ONE THING at a time**…the MOST IMPORTANT THING that must happen NOW. Don’t confuse or overwhelm the advocate. Make that one thing easy to do, easy to understand.
VIRTUAL RALLY FOR THE ARTS

If you are unable to host an in person arts advocacy day, you can always do a virtual rally.

The following is from Minnesota Citizens for the Arts

One of my board members came up with an idea that had a great impact for us this year, a “Virtual Rally for the Arts.” It took almost no time or staff resources to organize and produced over 1,480 emails to legislators in 24 hours!

Virtual Arts Advocacy Day was on April 20, and the first notice went out on April 5, about two weeks in advance.

The response was remarkable!

In those two weeks, each time a reminder went out, we got a small bump in Capwiz usage. (250 letters in the 2 weeks before the rally day). But the day of, all heck broke loose. I was printing out copies of letters all day, like a mouse at a feeding lever. When we sent out the update in the afternoon, a whole new wave of letters came in. We got 1,134 letters from 4 a.m. to midnight, and another 96 early the next morning. A total of 1,483 in 24 hours!

Tips:
- Make sure your computer service knows what you’re up to. Ours quit sending us copies of letters about 3:00 pm, thinking we were the victim of a “denial of service” spam attack. I got it fixed, but I missed copies of about 250 letters.
- Use your network to educate people about the event ahead of time, so they can forward your email and let other people in on the fun.

Here’s the schedule we used:

April 5:  First announcement and explanation of the event. (attached)
April 12: Second announcement and explanation of the event. (one week later)
April 15: Targeted emails sent to people who live in targeted districts urging them to participate.
April 20: 4 a.m. First Rally Email sent. (Many constituents sent emails between four and seven a.m. !)
April 20: 2:20 p.m. Rally Update Email sent, noting how many letters to legislators we had gotten so far and urging people to participate.
**Effective Electronic Communications (email)**

No matter if you live in a rural or urban, high or low population, large or small area, you absolutely must have an effective email communication system in place to efficiently and strategically communicate with your advocates around the state. This does not just mean sending them an email every quarter of so, but being proactive in educating them about important pieces of legislation, calling upon them to write or call their legislators when needed and updating them about your own activities.

In 2004, Americans for the Arts and many of the State Arts Action Network members opened up a new era of electronic communication. This is when we incorporated “Capwiz” into our advocacy systems. We began our email list with about 1,200 in 2004 and in 2007, have over 80,000 nationwide! When Americans for the Arts issues a legislative alert and asks for advocates to send an email to their federal elected officials, we can expect approximately 10,000 emails will be send within two days. This makes a huge difference on Capitol Hill.

Moreover, 25 states have their own version of Capwiz which is linked to the federal component. All information is shared between the states and the federal levels.

To learn more or sign up for Capwiz, go to [www.capwiz.com/artsusa](http://www.capwiz.com/artsusa)
Tools & Advocacy Links

National Organizations

- **AMERICANS FOR THE ARTS** [www.AmericansfortheArts.org](http://www.AmericansfortheArts.org)
The national organization that strives to make arts more accessible to every adult and child in America. The AFTA site contains an Arts Advocacy Page.

- **CENTER FOR LOBBYING IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST** [www.clpi.org](http://www.clpi.org)
CLPI is dedicated to educating charities about the important and appropriate role lobbying can play in achieving their missions. Available from the site is their publication *The Nonprofit Lobbying Guide* [www.clpi.org/toc.html](http://www.clpi.org/toc.html)

- **NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF STATE ARTS AGENCIES** [www.nasaa-arts.org](http://www.nasaa-arts.org)
NASAA is the membership organization of the nation's state and jurisdictional arts agencies.

- **NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS** [http://arts.endow.gov](http://arts.endow.gov)
The mission of the NEA is to foster the excellence, diversity and vitality of the arts in the United States, and to broaden public access to the arts. Since 1965, the NEA has awarded more than 111,000 grants to support thousands of projects.

- **OMB WATCH** [www.ombwatch.org](http://www.ombwatch.org)
Hosts an online resource to support capacity building for nonprofit advocacy by collecting the best practices of seasoned advocates and engaging newcomers with a wide range updated topics and tools.

- **NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF STATE LEGISLATURES** [www.ncsl.org](http://www.ncsl.org)
The National Conference of State Legislatures is a bipartisan organization that serves the legislators and staffs of the nation's 50 states, its commonwealths and territories. NCSL provides research, technical assistance and opportunities for policymakers to exchange ideas on the most pressing state issues.