

ADVOCACY

OR HOW TO TALK TO YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

WHAT IS POLITICAL ADVOCACY?

There's really nothing mysterious or difficult about being an advocate. When we're very young we ask for help to get our needs met. As we grow older, we learn skills that enable us to satisfy a broad range of personal needs for ourselves and our families. But what do we do about the things we can't control, like making sure the water piped into our home is both affordable and healthy, or the energy source that we use to fuel our cars and heat our homes won't have a negative impact on our environment.

How can we as individuals hope to have an impact on issues like these?

We can work together in large or small groups to talk about our concerns and identify our needs. Are there laws that either help or resolve our concerns, or work against what we're trying to do? In either case, we will need to talk to our elected officials to help them implement and enforce the laws that address our concerns or help them change the laws that are not helpful to us.

If we are not getting our basic needs met, we have the right and responsibility as citizens to contact those in office to express our concerns. A good public servant will want to hear from us, to find ways for us to work together for the betterment of everyone in our community.

SOME ADVOCACY TIPS

Teamwork is important. By talking with others, we learn more about the issues we're all concerned about. By working collaboratively, we encourage and inspire each other. Since there is strength in numbers, we'll have greater influence in ensuring that we're heard when we speak with people in positions of power who can help us get the results we want.

We do our homework and keep our focus. Rather than talking about a whole range of concerns, we go into our meeting with government officials with a carefully defined "ask." We let them know how the issue affects us personally. Real change doesn't happen overnight, but we will see results if we're polite, persistent and respectful.

HOW EDA CAN HELP

Successful advocacy depends on a solid plan and the right tools to take us through the process. EDA's Advocacy team can help individuals or groups develop the skills to take their place as active players in the democratic system. A strong democracy depends on our active participation in the political process. Contact us to find out how we can help you.

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