

## TEN COMMANDMENTS OF ADVOCACY

- I. Never lie to or mislead a legislator about the relative importance of an issue, the opposition's position or strength, or any other matter.
- II. Look for friends in unusual places. In politics, a friend is someone who works with you on a particular issue -- whether a Democrat or Republican, liberal or conservative -- even if that person or group opposes you on every other issue.
- III. Never cut anybody off from contact. Do not let a legislator consider you a bitter enemy because you disagree; today's opponent may be tomorrow's ally.
- IV. Do not grab credit -- share it -- you will build future allies.
- V. Your word is your bond. Never promise anything you cannot deliver.
- VI. Do not waste time on opponents who are publicly committed to their position. It is more productive to shore up known allies and to speak with legislators who are less committed or who claim to be neutral or are keeping an open mind.
- VII. Never forget to notice and thank anyone who has helped you. The "good ole boy/girl" system is alive and well.
- VIII. Do not gossip. Knowing legislators' peculiarities and peccadilloes is one thing; talking about them is another. Remember that discretion is the better part of valor.
- IX. "When you are crossed politically, don't get mad. Get even." (Bobby Kennedy)  
The power of the ballot box is yours!
- X. Carry a lucky charm. In advocacy, you can know your opponent; you can develop imaginative and reasonable compromises; you can burn the midnight oil to digest all the arguments; but it can go down the drain without a little luck.

## **ADVOCACY BASICS**

### **What is advocacy?**

Advocacy is the process by which you as an individual, and National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) as an organization, can speak up on behalf of the issues that matter most.

You don't have to be an expert on politics or even an expert on the issues to be an effective advocate. All you have to do is realize that you, as a voter and constituent, have the power to influence your legislators. Speak out! Make a phone call, send an email, or schedule an appointment – it is easy to get involved!

### **Why do we advocate?**

For over a century, NCJW has been at the forefront of social change, using its voice on important issues of public policy. NCJW members are powerful advocates on behalf of women, children, and families, as well as individual and civil rights.

We advocate because politicians need to be held accountable to their constituents for their actions and their votes. We advocate because we are inspired by our Jewish values to repair the world – *tikkun olam*. We advocate because our history has taught us that our actions make a difference.

### **How does NCJW advocate as an organization?**

NCJW advocates in many ways. Our NCJW president is the lead organizational spokesperson and issues statements and speaks on behalf of the entire organization. The State Public Affairs (SPA) network chairs, appointed by the president, act as national spokespeople for their states and represent NCJW in advocacy efforts on the state level, including representing the organization in state coalitions. Section leaders represent NCJW at the local level, including writing official letters to the editors of local newspapers and communicating with their local legislators, etc.

NCJW also has a professionally staffed Washington office that advocates for the organization at the federal level and helps coordinate its grassroots advocacy. Their efforts include lobbying on behalf of the entire membership and representing NCJW on national coalitions related to issues of concern to the organization.

### **How does NCJW determine its position on issues?**

NCJW's advocacy positions are based on the NCJW resolutions, including principles, which are revised and approved by the voting delegates at the NCJW convention every three years. In the months after Washington Institute, sections will receive packets of information about the NCJW resolutions process so that they can speak up to help determine NCJW's positions on the issues for the years to come. Talk to your section leader or SPA about ways to get involved in the resolution review process or other public policy activities.

## CONTACTING PUBLIC OFFICIALS

Advocacy is all about action. Speaking out on important issues – in person, on the phone, via letters, faxes, or emails, as an individual or in a group – is part of the democratic process. Make the most of the opportunity to express your views to decision-makers.

- ▶ Do your homework. Learn as much as possible about the issue of concern.
- ▶ Choose the method that is most comfortable for you. There are many ways to make your opinions known. The important thing is to take action.
- ▶ Have a clear, focused purpose for your action. Address one issue at a time. And use the facts. The more prepared you are, the more persuasive you can be.
- ▶ Be specific about what you want to achieve. What do you want your senator, representative, or other decision-maker to do?
- ▶ Communicate as a constituent. Show the legislator or official how his or her constituency is specifically affected by or concerned about the issue.
- ▶ Be courteous and reliable. Don't promise what you cannot deliver in terms of help or information. Leave your contact information. Always follow up on requests for additional materials or further clarification.

### Tips for Calling Members of Congress

Congressional offices keep track of calls from constituents on various issues and report the number of calls they get to the representatives and senators on a regular basis. Calling your legislator's office to register your opinion is an important way to advocate for the issues you care about.

- ▶ Call the US Capitol Switchboard at 202 224 3121 and ask to be connected to your legislator's office. You may also call the member of Congress outside of Washington in their district office (check the local phone book for those numbers).
- ▶ Information on contacting state and local officials can be found online at [www.statelocalgov.net](http://www.statelocalgov.net).
- ▶ Tell the person who answers the phone your name and address so that they know you are a constituent.
- ▶ Clearly explain your position on the issue (only address one issue per call) and what you would like the senator or representative to do (vote for or against a bill, etc.)
- ▶ If you have questions or want additional information, ask to speak with the staff person who works on the issue you are concerned about (for example: "May I speak with the staff person who works on child care?").

## Tips for Calling the White House

Calling the White House is similar to calling a legislator. However, the White House also has an automated opinion line where you may leave a recorded message.

To register your opinion on an issue, call the White House comment line at 202 456 1111.

## Tips for Making a Personal Visit

Meeting with a member of Congress, or congressional staff person, is an effective way to convey a message about a specific issue or legislative matter. Face-to-face meetings are important ways to build relationships with your elected officials and their staff.

- ▶ Call ahead to the legislator's office to make an appointment. Call the US Capitol Switchboard at 202 224 3121 and ask to be connected to the appropriate office. Ask to speak to the scheduler.
- ▶ Often you will have to fax a written request. Include the number of people joining you and what issues you want to discuss.
- ▶ Be prompt. If the legislator or official is late, be patient and flexible.
- ▶ Don't be disappointed if your meeting is with a staff person or if your meeting starts with the public official and ends with staff. There is great value in educating and building a relationship with the key staff people on your issues – they play a key role in decision-making in the legislative process.
- ▶ Bring some succinct written materials outlining your position and leave them with the person you are visiting.
- ▶ Follow up the meeting with a thank-you letter outlining what was covered and reiterate your main message on the issue. Include more materials if that might be helpful.

## Tips for Writing to Public Officials

Like phone calls, congressional offices keep track of emails from constituents on various issues and report the numbers to the representatives and senators on a regular basis. Sending an email to your member of Congress is another crucial way to advocate for the issues you care about.

- ▶ Email is an easy and efficient way to send a message to your legislators. Be sure to sign up for the NCJW Action Center on the website, [www.ncjw.org](http://www.ncjw.org). Use it to send a pre-written letter to decision-makers on selected topics on concern to NCJW. (You may edit the pre-written letter when it appears on your screen.) NCJW will send you periodic alerts asking you to take action.
- ▶ If you are writing a letter of your own, it is best to send it by email or fax. You may need to call the congressional office or look on their website ([www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) or [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov)) to find out the email address or fax number. Letters sent through the post office go through a

rigorous and lengthy security process once they arrive at Congress, slowing delivery by several days or more.

- ▶ Clearly state your purpose at the beginning of your letter (bill name/number and what you would like the legislator to do).
- ▶ When possible, include personal examples of why you support/oppose the particular bill.
- ▶ Address only one issue per letter and keep your message short and to the point.
- ▶ Unless you are an official NCJW spokesperson, your letters should be sent by you as an individual and not in the name of the organization.

### **Sending Emails**

When addressing an email to a public official, follow the same suggestions as for a printed letter. For the subject line of your e-mail, identify your message by topic or bill number.

The body of your message should use this format:

Your Name  
Address  
City, State Zip Code

Dear (Title) (Last Name),

Insert your message here...

### **Addressing Correspondence to a US Senator**

The Honorable (Full Name)  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator (Last Name):

### **Addressing correspondence to a US Representative**

The Honorable (Full Name)  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms. (Last Name):

## **CONGRESSIONAL STAFF ROLES**

Each member of Congress has staff to assist her/him with legislative work. To be effective in communicating with Congress, it is helpful to know the titles and principal functions of key staff.

### **Appointment Secretary/Scheduler**

The appointment secretary/scheduler is usually responsible for allocating the senator or representative's time among the many demands that arise from congressional responsibilities, staff requirements, and constituent requests. The appointment secretary may also be responsible for making necessary travel arrangements, arranging speaking dates, visits to the district, etc. This is the staff person you should contact to arrange a personal visit with your legislator or a member of his/her staff.

### **Chief of Staff**

The chief of staff (CoS) reports directly to the member of Congress. S/he usually has overall responsibility for evaluating the political outcomes of various legislative proposals and constituent requests. The CoS is usually the person in charge of overall office operations, including the assignment of work and the supervision of key staff.

### **Legislative Director**

The legislative director (LD) is usually the staff person who monitors the legislative schedule and makes recommendations regarding the pros and cons of particular issues. If you schedule a visit with your member of Congress, it is possible that the LD or LA will also be present during the meeting.

### **Legislative Aide/Assistant**

The legislative aide/assistant (LA) is responsible for legislative analysis and has particular expertise in specific areas. Depending on the responsibilities and interests of the member of Congress, an office may have a different LA for women's issues, education, welfare, etc. This is the person you should speak with if you call a congressional office with questions or for additional information about a particular issue.

# LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

Anyone may draft a bill; however, only members of Congress can introduce legislation and become sponsors. The official legislative process officially begins when a bill or resolution is numbered – H.R. signifies a House bill and S. a Senate bill. It is then referred to a committee or committees and printed by the Government Printing Office.

## **Step 1. Referral to Committee:**

With few exceptions, bills are referred to standing committees in the House or Senate according to carefully delineated rules of procedure.

## **Step 2. Committee Action:**

When a bill reaches a committee it is placed on the committee's calendar. A bill may be referred to a subcommittee or considered by the committee as a whole. It is at this point that a bill is examined carefully and its chances for passage are determined. If the committee does not act on a bill, it is usually the equivalent of killing it. There are procedures by which bills may be taken up without going through the standard committee process.

## **Step 3. Subcommittee Review:**

Often, bills are referred to a subcommittee for study and hearings. Hearings provide the opportunity to put on the record the views of the executive branch, experts, other public officials, supporters and opponents of the legislation. Testimony can be given in person or submitted as a written statement.

## **Step 4. Mark Up:**

When the hearings are completed, the subcommittee may meet to "mark up" the bill, that is, make changes and amendments prior to recommending the bill to the full committee. If a subcommittee votes not to report legislation to the full committee, the bill usually dies.

## **Step 5. Committee Action to Report a Bill:**

After receiving a subcommittee's report on a bill, the full committee may conduct further study and hearings, or it can hold its own mark up. The full committee then votes on its recommendation to the House or Senate. This procedure is called "ordering a bill reported."

## **Step 6. Publication of a Written Report:**

After a committee votes to have a bill reported, the committee chair instructs staff to prepare a written report on the bill. This report describes the intent and scope of the legislation, impact on existing laws and programs, position of the executive branch, and views of dissenting members of the committee.

### **Step 7. Scheduling Floor Action:**

After a bill is reported back to the chamber where it originated, it is placed in chronological order on the calendar. In the House, there are several different legislative calendars, and the Speaker and majority leader largely determine if, when, and in what order bills come up. In the Senate, there is only one legislative calendar.

### **Step 8. Debate on the Floor:**

When a bill reaches the floor of the House or Senate, there are rules and procedures governing the debate on the legislation. These rules determine the conditions and amount of time allocated for general debate. In the Senate, extended debate, called a "filibuster" can take place, delaying action on a bill. In order to end a filibuster and proceed to a vote, a cloture petition is filed. After 48 hours from the time of filing the petition, a vote is taken on whether to "invoke cloture." A two-thirds majority vote is required to invoke cloture and end a filibuster. In the House, the Rules Committee determines how a bill will be considered. This "rule" must be approved by the House before the legislation itself comes up for consideration.

### **Step 9. Voting:**

After the debate and the approval of any amendments, the bill is passed or defeated by the members voting.

### **Step 10. Referral to the Other Chamber:**

When a bill is passed by the House or the Senate it is referred to the other chamber, where it usually follows the same route through committee and floor action. This chamber may approve the bill as received, reject it, ignore it, or change it. Often a similar bill is already under consideration in the other chamber and becomes the vehicle for action.

### **Step 11. Conference Committee Action:**

If only minor changes are made to a bill by the other chamber, it is common for the legislation to go back to the first chamber for concurrence. However, when the actions of the other chamber significantly alter the bill, a conference committee is formed made up of key legislators involved in the issue from both chambers. That committee meets to reconcile the differences between the House and Senate-passed versions. If the conferees are unable to reach agreement, the legislation dies. If agreement is reached, a conference report is prepared describing the committee members' recommendations for changes. Both the House and the Senate must approve the conference report.

### **Step 12. Final Actions:**

After a bill has been approved by both the House and Senate in identical form, it is sent to the President. If the President approves of the legislation, he or she signs it, and it becomes law. Or, the President can take no action for ten days, while Congress is in session, and it automatically becomes law. If the President opposes the bill, he or she can veto it; or, if no action is taken after the Congress has adjourned its second session, it is a "pocket veto" and the legislation dies.

### **Step 13. Overriding a Veto:**

If the President vetoes a bill, Congress may attempt to "override the veto." This requires a two-thirds roll call vote in both the House and Senate of the members who are present.

## **ADVOCACY AT THE STATE AND LOCAL LEVEL**

Advocacy at all levels of government is important! The advocacy process does not change whether you are dealing with local, state, or federal issues. It requires the same basic steps – developing a clear, concise message and communicating it persuasively. State and local legislators are even more accessible than members of Congress. Often state legislators have fewer staff members and therefore are more directly involved with constituents. They have fewer constituents and even fewer who speak out, so it does not take many contacts to impress a state or local decision-maker.

### **State Public Affairs Network**

NCJW's State Public Affairs network coordinates the organization's advocacy efforts on the state level. State Public Affairs (SPA) chairs are appointed by the NCJW president in most states where there are NCJW sections. The SPA's job is to oversee statewide advocacy efforts and monitor state legislation and public policy initiatives that impact NCJW's issues. SPAs also represent the organization in state coalitions on issues of concern to NCJW.

### **At the Local Level**

Section leaders or the person they designate speak for NCJW at the local level (town, city, county, etc.). If your state has an SPA, it is always important to coordinate local advocacy with her, just as the SPA should keep sections in her state informed as to her activities and advocacy efforts.

### **State and Local Government Resources**

A directory of official state, county, and local government websites can be found online at [www.statelocalgov.net](http://www.statelocalgov.net).

The Library of Congress state and local government resource page can be found online at [www.loc.gov/global/state/stategov.html](http://www.loc.gov/global/state/stategov.html).

## STAYING ON TOP OF THE ISSUES

You don't have to be an expert to advocate on behalf of the issues you care about, but it helps to be informed! There are several ways to stay on top of the issues that are important to you.

### NCJW Action Center

The NCJW Action Center provides email updates and action alerts on critical issues so that you know when immediate action is needed. Sign up for the Action Center by logging onto <http://action.ncjw.org/ncjw/join.html>. When you join, you may indicate which issue areas specifically interest you, and you will only receive alerts on those particular issues.

### NCJW Websites

NCJW provides comprehensive resources on the web through two websites: [www.ncjw.org](http://www.ncjw.org) and [www.benchmarkcampaign.org](http://www.benchmarkcampaign.org). Through [www.ncjw.org](http://www.ncjw.org), you can read up on current issues, send an email to Congress, and learn about other NCJW events and programs. NCJW also has a website dedicated entirely to BenchMark: NCJW's Campaign to Save Roe, available at [www.benchmarkcampaign.org](http://www.benchmarkcampaign.org). This site provides information and action opportunities related to judicial nominations. Check both sites often for updates on federal legislation and judicial nominees. And, when you sign up for the NCJW Action Center, be sure to select "BenchMark and Choice" as one of your issues of interest, so you will receive action alerts related to the BenchMark campaign.

### State Public Affairs Committees

NCJW's State Public Affairs (SPA) chairs coordinate the statewide advocacy efforts of NCJW. If your state has an SPA, contact her to find out how to get involved. If you are not sure if you have an SPA, contact the Washington office. Many SPAs also send out updates on state legislation and action alerts on state-specific issues, so ask about signing onto the SPA email list if you are interested in staying on top of what is going on in your state.

## **Q & A on NCJW's 501(c)3 STATUS**

NCJW is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt non-profit organization, as determined by the Internal Revenue Service. While this status allows tax advantages for organizations such as NCJW, it also limits the activities in which the organization can legally participate. Below are a series of frequently asked questions and answers regarding allowable activity by NCJW and its sections. **Election-related activities must first be cleared with the NCJW Washington office.**

### **Can NCJW sections or members endorse a candidate or party?**

No, only as private individuals can NCJW members get involved in such activities. It must be clear that they are not acting as NCJW members.

### **Can NCJW endorse and work for or against referenda or ballot initiatives?**

Yes, we can get involved in issue-related measures.

### **Can NCJW encourage members to vote for candidates with certain views?**

No, telling members to vote for candidates who are "pro-choice" or "supportive of Israel" (for example) is like saying for whom to vote.

### **Can NCJW do candidate questionnaires?**

Yes, but with restrictions. NCJW must:

- ▶ Distribute the questionnaire to every candidate
- ▶ Ask a broad range of unbiased questions
- ▶ Distribute responses with no editorial comment, including stating NCJW's views

### **Can NCJW host candidate forums?**

Yes, with restrictions. NCJW must ensure that:

- ▶ All candidates who are considered serious contenders are invited to participate
- ▶ A broad range of unbiased questions are asked
- ▶ Candidates do not solicit contributions

### **What if one of the candidates cannot attend or does not respond to a questionnaire?**

First, ask that candidate to send a campaign representative to participate in the forum. If not, you may have to cancel if that leaves only one candidate to attend. In the case of questionnaires, make it clear that you received no response from a candidate. Again, if only one candidate provides answers, you should not do the questionnaire. (In races with more than two candidates, you can continue your effort without one candidate.)

### **May we invite someone who is running for office to speak?**

It is safer not to invite candidates to speak even at programs unrelated to elections. If, however, you do invite a candidate to speak as an expert on an issue or as a sitting public official, make it clear to the invitee that he/she must not refer to their candidacy or electioneer in any way. Clarify in your program, etc. that the speaker's appearance does not constitute a political endorsement.

### **In what sort of election activities is NCJW allowed to participate?**

NCJW members can conduct voter registration, conduct public education and training about participation in the political process, initiate get-out-the-vote drives that are not targeted only to voters with a particular viewpoint, and publish voting records.

### **Are there restrictions on publishing voting records?**

Yes. NCJW must:

- ▶ Include the entire legislative body/delegation
- ▶ Ensure that the voting records cover a broad range of issues
- ▶ Limit distribution of the voting record to NCJW members if the publication states NCJW's positions on issues and whether the candidate voted in accordance with those. Under no circumstances should it be distributed to the general public

### **What are some basic tips when planning election activities?**

- ▶ Always include all candidates
- ▶ Never state positions on any questions asked of candidates
- ▶ Present a broad and varied array of questions
- ▶ Never endorse or oppose a candidate or party
- ▶ Make sure your presentation is unbiased

### **Do I need approval for election-related activities?**

Yes, contact your SPA and/or the NCJW Washington office (202 296 2588 or [action@ncjwdc.org](mailto:action@ncjwdc.org)) to have your activity approved or any questions answered.

## KEY CONTACT INFORMATION

### NCJW Washington Office

1707 L St, NW, Suite 950  
Washington, DC 20036  
Tel 202 296 2588  
Fax 202 331 7792

[action@ncjwdc.org](mailto:action@ncjwdc.org)

### White House

1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20500  
Tel 202 456 1414  
Fax 202 456 2461

[president@whitehouse.gov](mailto:president@whitehouse.gov)

### US Capitol Switchboard

202 224 3121

### Senate Office Buildings

Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Hart Senate Office Building  
Russell Senate Office Building

### Senate Mailing Address

[Senate Building and Room Number]  
Washington, DC 20510

### House Office Buildings

Cannon House Office Building  
Longworth House Office Building  
Rayburn House Office Building

### House Mailing Address

[House Building and Room Number]  
Washington, DC 20515

### Senate and House Bill Status

202 225 1772

### Library of Congress

202 707 5000

## KEY WEBSITES

### NCJW

National Council of Jewish Women  
[www.ncjw.org](http://www.ncjw.org)

BenchMark: NCJW's Campaign to Save Roe  
[www.benchmarkcampaign.org](http://www.benchmarkcampaign.org)

### EXECUTIVE

The White House  
[www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov)

### JUDICIARY

Supreme Court of the United States  
[www.supremecourtus.gov](http://www.supremecourtus.gov)

### LEGISLATIVE

US Senate  
[www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov)

US House of Representatives  
[www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov)

Clerk of the House  
[Clerk.house.gov](http://Clerk.house.gov)

THOMAS (Legislative Information on the Internet)  
[Thomas.loc.gov](http://Thomas.loc.gov)

Congressional Record  
[www.gpoaccess.gov/crecord](http://www.gpoaccess.gov/crecord)

### OTHER GOVERNMENT RESOURCES

Federal Register  
[www.archives.gov/federal\\_register](http://www.archives.gov/federal_register)

The Library of Congress  
[www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov)

State and Local Government on the Net  
[www.statelocalgov.net](http://www.statelocalgov.net)