



ADVOCACY FUNDAMENTALS

Jewish Community Relations Council | 2019 - 2020



“If I am not for me, who is for me; and if I am (only) for myself, what am I. And if not now, when?”

– Hillel, Pirkei Avot, 1:14

TABLE OF CONTENTS

About The Jewish Community Relations Council..... 2

What is Advocacy..... 3

Advocacy How To’s

 Contacting Elected Officials..... 4

 How to Write a Letter..... 7

 Sample Letter..... 8

 Tips for Calls..... 8

Government Contacts 10

Resources 11

צדק צדק תרדף

PURSUE JUSTICE!

– Deuteronomy 16:20

ABOUT THE JEWISH COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL

Who We Are

The Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) is a convening body for local Jewish agencies involved in advocacy and public affairs. Greater Philadelphia's JCRC is part of a national network that works to provide a Jewish voice on national public policy, as well as having our voices heard locally and in our State Capitol. We are a non-partisan organization engaged in issues of importance to the Jewish community.

What We Do

We work with diverse stakeholders to develop consensus positions on issues of concern and to advocate for these positions – both within the community and at the policy-making level. Locally, we are the hub around which diverse groups can come together to air concerns, find common ground, and raise public awareness. Through dialogue and advocacy we work for a more just, inclusive world.

Lead and Convene

We address a wide range of policy concerns from gun violence prevention and voting and civic engagement to combating anti-Semitism and the organized efforts to delegitimize the state of Israel. Our portfolio also includes advocating for protection of the safety net including hunger relief, protecting our aging community, and Medicaid and Medicare. We issue action alerts and informational documents that provide ways to get involved.

“If Moses could lobby Pharaoh, you can lobby your [government]”

— Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi, President, RespectAbility

WHAT IS ADVOCACY?

We advocate any time we make our voices heard, educate, argue or act for a cause or position that matters to us. Civic engagement and legislative advocacy are important responsibilities in a democracy. Lobbying – seeking to influence a politician or public official – is an important form of advocacy.

For decades, the Jewish Federation system has been at the forefront of matters affecting Jews around the world, using our voice to influence important public policy debates. We continue to advocate because elected officials and their staffs need to hear from their constituents regarding their actions and their votes. Furthermore, we are inspired by our Jewish values to repair the world (*tikkun olam*). And our history has taught us that our actions truly make a difference.

It is critical that Jewish leaders meet face-to-face with elected officials or their staff on the local, state and federal levels as a way to not only affect legislation but to build and maintain meaningful relationships with those in government who can make a difference. There are many ways to advocate and each of us has an important role. Every voice makes a difference.

THE FOUR QUESTIONS OF EFFECTIVE JEWISH ADVOCACY

Courtesy of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism

Any advocacy effort, whether lobbying, writing letters, or media outreach, must answer four basic questions:

1. Why is this good public policy?

Every issue has consequences on local, national, and international levels. It is important to address these issues, and explain why immediate action is crucial to the health and well-being of our communities, nation and world.

2. Why is this issue important to me as an individual?

The best advocates are the ones who can personalize their message. Doing so will show your elected officials that you personally took the time to consider an issue's impact on your life. Additionally, personalizing your message conveys a confidence and openness that will bring emotion and validity to any letter or lobby visit.

3. Why is this issue important to me as a member of the Jewish community?

The Jewish voice is both unique and essential. To be a Jew is to care about the world around us, to hear the voice of the prophets in our head and be engaged in the ongoing work of *tikkun olam*. Both the Jewish tradition and the public policy arena rely on this voice to communicate the needs and desires of the Jewish community.

4. What is my legislative ask?

From zoning permits to sewage treatment plants to power plant emissions, your elected official works on a number of issues. It is important to be specific when speaking or writing to them to ensure that their actions match your intentions.

By addressing these issues, organizations, congregations and individuals will make their advocacy efforts personal, persuasive and pointed.

ADVOCACY HOW-TO'S

Contacting Elected Officials

Adapted from the Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford

The most effective ways to contact your elected officials are by personal visit, letter, phone or email. In the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the Governor is the chief executive. Our legislature is known as the General Assembly and is comprised of the Senate and the House of Representatives. The General Assembly makes the laws that direct the executive branch; it is one of the few state legislatures that is considered full-time, although practically speaking, session does not take place during July and August, when legislators work from their district offices.

The various counties also have their own governments. In Philadelphia, there is a Mayor (executive) and City Council (legislative). The surrounding counties have County Executives or Commissioners.

To contact state officials, you may contact either their Harrisburg office or their local office. As with federal officials, your most effective means of communication with your elected state representatives are personal visits, phone calls and letters. To find your state legislator and their contact information, go to legis.state.pa.us.

“One person can make a difference, and everyone should try.”

— John F. Kennedy

Personal Meetings

To schedule a meeting with a member of Congress, it’s best to go through the Washington, D.C., office. If you want to invite your member of Congress to speak with you or an organization in your neighborhood, you may call the local or the Washington office. The same is true of State or County elected officials. For in-district meetings, contact the local office of the elected official. To meet in the State Capitol, City Hall or County office, contact the office in Harrisburg or the appropriate city/county office. If the meeting is with the elected official rather than staff, you may be given more time when the official is in his/her district office; however, with Members of Congress, most policy discussions with staff, may take place in DC as the District Offices are usually focused on constituent services.

ADVOCACY HOW TO'S (CONTINUED)

Before The Meeting

Preparation is key for your legislative meetings, whether it is with the elected official or their staff. Before you go, make sure you’re ready.

Decide On Your Issues

If you are going with a group, decide on the issues ahead of time and disseminate them to the group.

Do Your Homework

Participate in calls or meetings regarding the bills/issues on which you will be advocating. Make sure you read materials on the issues that are provided, including background papers and newspaper articles. Whenever possible, bring to the meeting information and materials supporting your position. Legislators are required to take positions on many different issues and may sometimes lack important details about the pros and cons of a particular matter. It is therefore helpful to share with them information and examples that clearly demonstrate the impact or benefits associated with a particular issue or piece of legislation. It is also helpful to have an informational document or material to give to the legislator and/or staff person.

Learn About The People With Whom You Will Be Meeting

Knowing about your “target” makes it easier to engage. Look up their biography. Does that elected official have a record of support for the issue? What is the best way to approach that individual? For example, for some elected officials, making the ask personal (why the issue is important to you) is the way to go; however, if the elected official is a fiscal conservative, personal stories may not resonate. Also, don’t be offended if you meet with a staff person instead of the elected official, or if a staff person is present at the meeting. Legislators make decisions largely based on the recommendations of their staffs, so the legislative assistant will often guide the issue to completion.

Be Professional

Dress appropriately for the meeting (comfortable shoes are advised if you are going to the Hill) and make sure you make eye contact and give a firm handshake.

Practice

If you are a novice at advocating, practice what you are going to say, either with the group with whom you will be advocating or in front of a mirror. Remember, legislators represent you and they are interested in what their constituents have to say.

ADVOCACY HOW TO'S (CONTINUED)

Sample Letter

Date _____

The Honorable [Full Name]
Address

Dear Senator/Representative [Name]:

As your constituent, I am writing to ask for your support for the Never Again Education Act. The Act, introduced as S.2085/H.R. 943, would provide public resources to effectively teach about the Holocaust and help combat anti-Semitism. This bipartisan legislation would:

- Establish a fund at the US Department of Education to help teachers develop and improve Holocaust Education programs;
- Authorize \$2 million in federal funds to support this work for the next five years while encouraging private donations;
- Provide funding directly to teachers to develop individualized programs that best suit their students;
- Cover expenses such as training for educators, textbooks and field trips;
- Create a Holocaust education website as a hub for resources and best practices.

In 2014, Pennsylvania implemented Act 70 which stipulated that students be educated on the Holocaust, Genocide and Human Rights. This program has been phenomenally successful and I have no doubt that the proposed federal language will further the goal of educating our students so that the horrors of the Holocaust will not be repeated.

As the grandchild of a Holocaust survivor, I feel very strongly that the lessons of the Holocaust should remain at the forefront, especially given the global increase in anti-Semitism. Recent studies find that the Holocaust is fading from public memory. The Never Again Education Act will enable the next generation to grow up understanding the Holocaust and the consequences of apathy, prejudice and hatred.

Please join the 225 House Members in co-sponsoring this critical piece of legislation and urge leadership to bring this matter to a vote.

Thank you for your consideration. Your efforts on behalf of the Jewish community are greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Your Name

ADVOCACY HOW TO'S (NOTES)

ADVOCACY HOW TO'S (CONTINUED)

Tips For Phone Calls

- Before you call, draft a few speaking points. It will help you make the most of the call and avoid getting flustered.
- Telephone calls are usually taken by a staff member. Ask to speak with the aide who handles the issue about which you wish to comment.
- After identifying yourself as a constituent, tell the aide you would like to leave a brief message, such as: “Please tell Senator/Representative [NAME] that I support/oppose (S. _____ /H.R. _____).”
- State your reasons for support or opposition to the bill. Ask for your senators’ or representatives’ position on the bill. You may also request a written response to your phone call.

[illegible]

GOVERNMENT CONTACTS

Senator Robert P. Casey, Jr.

383 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
202.224.6324

2000 Market Street, Suite 1870
Philadelphia, PA 19103
215.405.9660

Senator Patrick J. Toomey

248 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
202.224.4254

200 Chestnut Street #600
Philadelphia, PA 19106
215.241.1090

Brian Fitzpatrick (1st District)

1722 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
202.225.4276

1717 Langhorne-Newtown Rd., Suite 400
Langhorne, PA 19047
215.579.8102

Brendan Boyle (2nd District)

1133 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
202.225.6111

8572 Bustleton Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19152
215.335.3355

Dwight Evans (3rd District)

1105 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
202.225.4001

7174 Ogontz Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19138
215.276.0340

Madeleine Dean (4th District)

129 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
202.225.5836

115 E Glenside Ave, Suite 1
Glenside, PA 19038
215.884.4300

Mary Gay Scanlon (5th District)

1535 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
202.225.2011

927 East Baltimore Avenue
East Lansdowne, PA 19050
610.626.1913

Chrissy Houlahan (6th District)

1218 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
202.225.4315

709 E. Gay Street, Suite 4
West Chester, PA 19380
610.883.5050

To find your State Legislators, go to legis.state.pa.us

For County Governments:

Bucks County | buckscounty.org/government
Chester County | chesco.org/3205/government
Delaware County | delcopa.gov/electedofficials/index.html
Montgomery County | montcopa.org/27/administration
Philadelphia County | phila.gov

RESOURCES

The following are some suggested resources for additional information on advocacy.

- **Committee of Seventy**

seventy.org

The Committee of Seventy is a non-partisan civic leadership organization that advances representative, ethical and effective government in Philadelphia and the Commonwealth through citizen engagement and public policy advocacy. They are an excellent resource for all things government, including voters' guides, finding your elected officials and political maps.

• Writing a Letter to the Editor

These two sites offer excellent suggestions and a useful template:

honestreporting.com/5-tips-getting-letter-published

naeyc.org/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/letter-editor-template

• Council on Foundations – Advocacy Toolkit

cof.org/public-policy/advocacy-toolkit

The advocacy toolkit is designed to be a central resource for people to learn about why it is important for philanthropy to have a voice in policy, how to effectively use advocacy and lobbying to advance your mission, what the most critical or priority asks are for the philanthropic sector and to better understand the key policy issues that are top of mind for the sector. There is a plethora of best practices and common sense tools.

- **Center for Lobbying in the Public Interest (CLPI)**

clpi.org

CLPI promotes, supports and protects 501(c)(3) nonprofit advocacy and lobbying in order to strengthen participation in our democratic society and advance charitable missions. Useful downloads on their website include [The Nonprofit Lobbying Guide](#) and [Strategies for Nonprofit Engagement in Legislative Advocacy](#).

- **Independent Sector**

independentsector.org

The Independent Sector is a nonprofit, nonpartisan coalition of more than 700 national nonprofit organizations, foundations and corporate philanthropy programs, collectively representing tens of thousands of charitable groups across the country. Their goal is to promote, strengthen and advance the nonprofit and philanthropic community to foster private initiative for the public good. Useful downloads on their website include *Governance is Governance* and *Giving and Volunteering in the United States*.

• **OMB Watch**

ombwatch.org

OMB Watch is a nonprofit government watchdog organization in Washington DC. Their mission is to promote open government, accountability and citizen participation.

NOTES:

JEWISH COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL STAFF

Batya Glazer
Director, JCRC

Robin Schatz
Director, Government Affairs

Jason Holtzman
Program Officer

“On reaching the shores of the United States, Jews found a safe haven. The rights guaranteed by the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights have allowed us the freedom to practice our religion without interference and to live in this republic in safety.

A fundamental principle of Judaism is *hakara hatov* – recognizing benefits afforded us and giving expression to our appreciation. Therefore, it is incumbent upon each Jewish citizen to participate in the democratic system, which safeguards the freedoms which we enjoy. The most fundamental responsibility incumbent on each individual is to register and to vote.

Therefore, I urge all members of the Jewish community to fulfill their obligations by registering as soon as possible and by voting. By this, we can express our appreciation and contribute to the continued security of our community.”

— *Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, 1984*



Jewish Federation
of Greater Philadelphia

Jewish Community Relations Council