Advocacy/Lobbying
I Can Do What?
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What is SC Appleseed

- We are a non profit law office that provides community engagement, advocacy and litigation on issues impacting the low wealth community in South Carolina;
- We do not provide individual legal assistance, that is the responsibility of SC Legal Services;
- Four lawyers, two MSW, two organizers (we are hiring), one admin and one communications/fundraiser
- [www.scjustice.org](http://www.scjustice.org), [www.schealtcarevoices.org](http://www.schealtcarevoices.org); [www.signupsc.org](http://www.signupsc.org);
- [https://www.facebook.com/AppleseedSC/](https://www.facebook.com/AppleseedSC/)
- @Appleseedsc
What is Advocacy?

Sharing information that you have on particular subject or topic to help yourself or more important help a constituency that you are helping;

You have vital and important information on issues that can and should help to shape policy;

How many times have you said “I can’t believe he voted that way what was he thinking?”

If you didn’t talk to him or her then clearly he was not thinking about what was important to you.
It can seem intimidating to talk to an elected official

- Remember you know what you are talking about

- Remember he or she probably does not know a whole lot about what you are talking about

- It should not be stump the legislator or stump the citizen

- If he asks you a question and you don’t know be honest, that is all you have is your word and dignity

- But you have something else: A way to get the information to educate. Always ok to say, I don’t know and go back to him later.
NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS ARE PERMITTED TO LOBBY

- To many mistakenly assume that it is illegal for non-profits to lobby.

- To the contrary, federal laws actually exist to encourage charities to lobby within certain specified limits.

- You have a story and information that can shape policy, stop putting band aids on the problem, address the root cause.
KNOW WHAT IS ALLOWED

- Knowing what constitutes lobbying under the law, and what the limits are, is the key to being able to lobby legally and safely.

- As a non-profit you have specific knowledge about your constituency’s needs and have an obligation to voice this to policy makers.
WHAT IS LOBBYING?

Generally speaking, the IRS defines lobbying as the attempt to influence the passage, defeat, introduction or amendment of legislation, including bills introduced by a federal, state or local legislative body, bond issues, referenda, constitutional amendments, and Senate confirmation votes on Executive branch nominees.
LOBBYING DEFINED BY IRS

- **Direct lobbying** -- In general, any attempt to influence any legislation through communication with a legislator, an employee of a legislative body or other government official, which:
  - refers to specific legislation; and
  - reflects a view on such legislation.
IT IS ALL ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS

- You need to develop that relationship at home;
- Do you know your Senator and Representatives?
- Don’t wait to meet him at the statehouse;
- Invite him to your program to show off what you do.
- Do you serve his constituents?
USE YOUR BOARD TO DEVELOP CONTACTS

- Your Board members may have the “in” that you don’t have;
- Board members donate to campaigns;
- Board members have their calls answered;
- Don’t assume they know how to be an advocate
GIVE HONEST, CRITICAL INFORMATION

- No one likes a dissertation;
- No one likes to be threatened;
- Your issue is probably not even on the radar;
- Having one page information sheets is always helpful;
- When you ask for a vote be specific;
- Everyone likes to be thanked.
It is only hard if you let it be

- Making that call to a US senator or Representative: 5 minutes- that is if you get a live person taking the information. Always ask that you get a response
- Tweeting does not make a difference
- You can write a letter, but send it from the heart and once again ask for response
- Instead of checking Facebook, make the call, instead of tweeting a few profound thoughts make the call
- You may be making your life a lot easier down the road if you take the time to do this. How? Your clients lives are better so you have less stress