STAND UP, SPEAK OUT!
Tools for the Citizen Advocate
DEFINING ADVOCACY

Issue-based advocacy is: supporting a cause, educating others on it, and convincing them of appropriate actions to take. *It is not enough to just vote*, we must stay informed and active, and communicate with our legislators, who we pay to make laws for us!

When we talk about advocacy, we typically mean...

- Correspondence with Lawmakers (local, state, federal)
- Correspondence with the Press (Letters to the Editor)

But we also have other avenues that may be used to sway public opinion...

- Social media
- Educating peer groups (friends, churches, community organizations.... book clubs... teammates... whoever will listen!)

*Democracy is Not a Spectator Sport!!*
THREE LEVELS OF LAWMAKING

LOCAL: City Council, County Council, School Board

- These are the people we can get to know and have the most access to, and they make many important decisions.

STATE: Everyone has 1 representative (there are 124) and 1 senator (there are 46)

- This presentation focuses on state-level legislation, drawing from LWVSC’s Advocacy 101:

NATIONAL: Everyone has 1 representative and 2 state-wide senators representing them in Congress

- So for many of us in Charleston, this is Representative Mark Sanford, and Senators Tim Scott and Lindsey Graham

- Great resources available for being informed on national issues and Congressional votes: Vote Smart, ProCon.org, Bipartisanpolicy.org, Countable app, Intelligence Squared Podcast
What Are the Barriers to Advocacy (and how do we break through them?)

- Process is too complicated
- Hard to learn about issues
- Not sure *how* to take action
  
  - Apathy, distrust or dislike of the political system
  - Peer groups don’t do it
  - Feeling like you can’t make a difference
The Legislative Process

- Session runs from January-May, our legislative session runs in 2 year terms.
- Bills can be introduced in the House or the Senate.
  - For instance: H 3339 is the House bill on redistricting while S 341 is the Senate bill on redistricting
- Bills must go through a long process; most do not become law.
- After the first reading, the bill is usually sent to a subcommittee. This is where public testimony can be heard. Standing committees: 13 in House, 15 in Senate. House members may sit on more than one committee, Senators will sit on multiple; their assignments are included on their webpage at scstatehouse.gov.
- If the bill passes out of subcommittee favorably, then on to committee, then full chamber for debate. If it passes, it will repeat the process in the other chamber.
- The budget process is separate, and is mandatory since the legislature is required by law to pass a balanced budget. The budget always starts in the House Ways and Means Committee, so this is a powerful committee.
Staying Informed on SC Legislation

Online
- Scstatehouse.gov
- Statehousereport.com
- Ruoff policy updates
- Social media: LWVSC & LWVCA, issue-based groups... edit your Facebook News Feed preferences so you can prioritize updates/action alerts from these groups

Print/Other Media
- Post and Courier
- The State Newspaper
- SCETV: This Week in South Carolina (episodes are also online at scetv.org)
- State House Week (Fridays, SC Public Radio or podcast)

In Person
- Issue Forums
- Town Halls
- Charleston County Legislative Delegation meetings (usually once per month during session, in Chas.)
TAKING ACTION

■ Visits to local Congressional offices – relationships with staff members can be important

■ Visits to the State House – Tuesday-Thursdays during session; public testimony allowed in subcommittee only
  - Concentrate on your own legislator
  - Be prepared to deliver concise messages with more thorough written information to leave behind with your legislator
  - Take the initiative to follow up on your visits, don’t wait for staff to do so

■ Phone calls – Program numbers into your phone and be prepared for action alerts!! When calling your legislator’s office, you will often get a staff member, and should be prepared to leave a message with them.

■ Social media networks - Facebook, Twitter…. Do your legislators Tweet?
  - Posts with graphics get more attention and can convey a lot of information: Canva.com is a free resource for graphic design

■ Steer away from shaming or bullying your representatives. You are looking to establish a positive, productive relationship. Sometimes an opponent on one issue will be an ally on another, so don’t burn any bridges!
EXPAND YOUR REACH

Engage children and your peer groups! Volunteer!

Get Out the Vote efforts, scvotes.org web buttons, bridging the partisan divide

Letters to the Editor: 150-200 words, local statistics and relevance