

# Advocacy: You Can Make a Difference

## Step-by-Step Advocacy

### Step 1: Identify Your Cause.

- ✓ What do you want? Focus on the solution, not the complaint!
- ✓ Ask for it all, but be willing to compromise.
- ✓ See the big picture.
- ✓ Define the problem.
- ✓ What do you want fixed?
- ✓ Is there more than one solution?

### Step 2: Do Your Homework.

- ✓ Know the issue – and put it into human terms.
- ✓ Gather facts and expert information.
- ✓ List the pros and cons of your solution.
- ✓ Form a response to the cons.
- ✓ Track legislation and learn the legislative process.

### Step 3: Know Your Legislators.

- ✓ Every Iowan is represented by one Senator and one Representative.
- ✓ Visit the legislative website ([www.legis.state.ia.us](http://www.legis.state.ia.us)).
- ✓ Contact your county auditor, or your state/local election commissioner.
- ✓ Go to your local library for help if all else fails.

### Step 4: Rally the Troops.

- ✓ Who else supports your cause (legislators, businesses, organizations).
- ✓ Enlist their support.
- ✓ Decide on common themes – so your messages resonate.
- ✓ Help your legislator understand why your position is important to his/her constituents.
- ✓ Fight where the legislator lives through grassroots at home.
- ✓ Be prepared to give the legislator information s/he can use.

### Step 5: Build Support for Your Cause.

- ✓ Use the media.
- ✓ Strength in numbers – work as a group.

### Step 6: Determine Who Can Help You.

- ✓ City Council/Mayor
- ✓ Businesses/Civic Organizations
- ✓ Child welfare, health care providers
- ✓ Legislators
- ✓ Lobbyists
- ✓ Media/News Editors

**Step 7: Communicate.**

- ✓ Attend city council meetings.
- ✓ Make appointments with the person you selected in Step 6.
- ✓ Make telephone calls.
- ✓ Visit your State Capitol – and Lobby!
- ✓ Write letters or email.
- ✓ Invite your legislator to a community event or go to a fundraiser.

**Step 8: What to Write/Say.**

- ✓ State the problem.
- ✓ State the solution.
- ✓ Put the issue into context with a personal story.
- ✓ Ask for help.
- ✓ Say thank you!
- ✓ Follow up.

**Step 9: Keep It Short & Simple.**

- ✓ Be courteous and respectful.
- ✓ Be brief, concise, and to the point.
- ✓ Be informative and truthful.
- ✓ Be positive – always make your case without being critical of others.

**Step 10: Support Those Who Support You.**

- ✓ Join organizations sympathetic to your cause.
- ✓ Support candidates who support you.
- ✓ Remember – there are no permanent friends or permanent enemies.
- ✓ Do not take traditional friends for granted.
- ✓ Never write off a legislator just because of party affiliation.
- ✓ Don't make legislative enemies – you might need them in the future.

**Step 11: Remember – It's Not Personal.**

- ✓ Listen to your opponents with the same respect and attention you want.
- ✓ Try to understand their position.
- ✓ Keep channels of communication open.
- ✓ Seek compromise and be diplomatic.

**Step 12: Don't Give Up – or Give In.**

- ✓ Remember Rome wasn't built in a day.
- ✓ Be persistent and consistent.
- ✓ Aim for consensus rather than victory. Be willing to settle for making progress.
- ✓ Stay committed – you have a compelling, energizing reason to keep fighting until you accomplish your goal.