

# Advocacy 101 – Do's and Don'ts

## Advocacy is Critical

- Privilege and responsibility to contact Texas legislators about issues important to you
- Regular sessions meet only once a biennium but offices are open year-round
- You are the experts
- “I didn’t hear from anyone”
- 5.4 million students / largest item in state budget

# Advocacy 101 – Do's and Don'ts

## How can my voice be heard?

- Determine who represents you
- Phone call
- Personal visits
- Correspondence – email or written
- Provide public testimony
- Know the basics of the process – Congress vs. Texas Legislature

# Advocacy 101 – Do's and Don'ts

## Who represents me?

- Generally speaking, you only want to contact *your* legislator on issues/bills as they respond to their own constituents who elect them
- Texas House website, “Who Represents Me,” provides House, Senate and congressional representatives
- Exception: committees when hearing or voting on a bill of interest
- Don't forget governor's veto power (bill or line item veto: 10- or 20-day time frame)

# Advocacy 101 – Do's and Don'ts

## Phone Contact

- Be prepared – brief notes outlining bill number, position and rationale
- Tell your legislator/office what you would like them to do /vote
- If you can't speak with the legislator, ask for the staff member who covers education-related issues
- Provide contact information if appropriate
- Be courteous and professional

# Advocacy 101 - Do's and Don'ts

## Email or Written Correspondence

- Brief introduction of yourself, include the bill number, your position and rationale – BRIEF
- Spelling, grammar, punctuation and tone
- Contact information – want to be seen as a resource
- Inquire about the legislator's position
- Be professional and courteous

# Advocacy 101 – Do's and Don'ts

## Personal Visits

- Schedule an appointment if possible – staff or member
- Limit to 30 minutes max – maybe less during session
- Dress professionally – better to be overdressed
- Prepare materials, “leave behinds” (one-pager vs. *War and Peace*)
- Follow up – a thank-you note/card also serves as reminder of visit

# Advocacy 101 – Do's and Don'ts

## Public Testimony

- Dress professionally
- Be brief – often strict time limits imposed
- Speak clearly and don't read your testimony
- State your position on the bill up front
- Thank them for the opportunity
- Offer to be a resource or answer any questions

# Advocacy 101 – Do's and Don'ts

## General Do's

- Be professional to all (dress, speaking, written materials)
- If you don't know the answer, tell them you will get back with them – and follow up
- Offer to be resource on your issues – school finance, business operations
- Be brief; “make it fit on a bumper sticker”
- Stay engaged, build and nurture relationships



# Advocacy 101 – Do's and Don'ts

## General Don'ts

- Don't be disrespectful
- Don't answer if you don't know – credibility is your best friend
- Don't overload staff or members with information – time sensitive
- Don't wait for the regular session – start today
- Don't assume they know school business

# Advocacy 101 – Do's and Don'ts

## Examples

- Egos (no lack of confidence at the Capitol)
- Head games (don't fall for them)
- Prepare to be interrupted / challenged /questioned
- Credibility is key



# Advocacy 101 – Do's and Don'ts

## Useful Information to Have on Hand

- Annual budget
- Student population (enrollment and demographics)
- Fund balance (designated vs. undesignated)
- Tax rate, local debt, LHE
- Administrative costs (what they include)

# Advocacy 101 – Do's and Don'ts

## **Vote, Folks!**

- 1 governor
- 1 lieutenant governor
- 150 House members
- 31 Senators
- = impact lives of 5.4 million students, 340k teachers, 1,200+ districts and charter schools, 8,500+ campuses

# Advocacy 101 – Do's and Don'ts

## Contact TASA GR staff

- Amy Beneski - [abeneski@tasanet.org](mailto:abeneski@tasanet.org)
- Ramiro Canales – [rcanales@tasanet.org](mailto:rcanales@tasanet.org)
- Casey McCreary – [cmccreary@tasanet.org](mailto:cmccreary@tasanet.org)
- 512-477-6361