



## TOOLS FOR EFFECTIVE GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY

### Ways to Engage in Grassroots Advocacy

- Write a Letter to Editor
- Make a phone call or send an email about a legislative issue/bill
- Write a letter about a legislative issue/bill
- Rallies/media events
- Lobby day
- Attend a committee meeting
- Schedule an in-person meeting with your legislator
  - Best time is when the legislators are NOT in session → they have more time to spend with you!
  - But DO go during the session (stop by your legislators' offices even if you don't have a set appointment)

### Do's and Don'ts of Effective Advocacy

#### DON'T...

- Be confrontational, berate, or yell
- Threaten
- Get off the subject or ramble on...and on...and on...
- Guess or make up data
- Say "this was a waste of my time"
- Blow off a Legislative Aide or other staffer because they are often the eyes & ears
- Talk about how bad they are while at the capitol
- Write a letter to the editor saying how awful they are

#### DO...

- Be positive and friendly
- Be BRIEF and concise; limit the number of issues
- Use fact sheets (leave one behind)
- Give reliable information
- Say "I don't know" if you don't know...then offer to find out!
- Be clear about your position ("I support because/I oppose because")
- Thank them for their time
- Wait until you're in the car to complain
- Write a thank you letter when you get home

## THE IN-PERSON MEETING

### How

- Get a small group together (no more than 4 unless it is a more formal event)
- Plan! Decide ahead of time what your main message will be. Pick about 2 items to focus on.
- Preferably all from the legislator's district.
- Call the office and ask to schedule an appoint (find the number online or call 804-698-7410)
- Explain what you'd like to meet about

### When

- The best time is OFF session. But DO go DURING the session – even if you only get 3 minutes
- Call early for an appointment. You may have to wait a few weeks.
- Be as flexible as possible with your schedule

### Where

- His/her place of employment
- His/her district office
- Your house
- Restaurant

### Agenda

- Introductions
- Describe problem or issue
- Tell personal story. Remember the three keys to successful personal-storytelling:
  - Keep it short (hard as that may be)
  - Have a point
  - Tie it to a solution or your position (“That’s why I’m asking you to please support XYZ”)
- Offer solutions
- Talk about what is happening in their district and why they should care about the issue
- Ask for their position
- Thank him/her – no matter what!

### Remember...

- Be succinct – You may only have 15 – 20 minutes!
  - Be on time
  - Know what committee he or she is on
  - Plan ahead who will start
  - Plan ahead who will make what points
  - Refer to legislator as “Delegate/Senator so-and-so (last name)”
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