

ADVOCATING WITH NCJW GHS

NCJW Greater Houston Section advocates locally, statewide, and nationally.

ADVOCACY GUIDE



Join us in Houston

Hannah's Vision is our yearly forum to discuss local, national, and international issues for which we advocate.

Have friends, families or neighbors who would be interested in becoming advocates or brushing up their skills? You host the party and we'll provide information, training, and a speaker.



Join us in Austin

Day on the Hill features workshops and training on advocacy to lobby our core issues – Reproductive Justice, Repeal Campus Carry, Reform Foster Care, Human Trafficking, Medicare Expansion, and Voting Rights. Then we put what we learn into action as we travel to the capitol to talk to our state representatives.



Join us for National Events

NCJW Inc. sponsors an annual meeting on a rotating basis: National Convention, Leadership Conference, and Washington Institute. Any member is welcome to attend. Join us as we gather with like minded people from around the country.



Join our advocacy committee and learn more!

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INSIDE THIS GUIDE:

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The National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) is a grassroots organization of volunteers and advocates who turn progressive ideals into action. Inspired by Jewish values, NCJW strives for social justice by improving the quality of life for women, children, and families and by safeguarding individual rights and freedoms.

TALKING ABOUT YOUR ISSUES

Who should you talk to?

In addition to public officials, it is also important that you speak with your friends and family about issues that are important to you.

But I'm not an expert...

You don't need to be expert—you just need to care.

- Speak about your experiences
- Learn about the issue from both sides
- Don't feel like you need an answer to every argument

Make it personal...

Tell your own story—explain why you care.

- Speak from your heart
- Be respectful
- It's okay to say "I don't know, let me get back to you"

Ask for what you want...

- Ask for their help on the issue, their vote to support legislation, or who they know who can help you
- Share your commitment to support the issue

NCJW TIPS ON MEETING WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS

National Council of Jewish Women
Greater Houston Section

Plan your visits.

- Think through what you want to say. Encounters with legislators are sometimes brief or rushed. Planning your main points will ensure that you can be concise if pressed for time.
- Find out your legislator's position on the issues that are important to you.
- Come prepared with information to give the legislator and **something to leave behind** in case you miss him/her.

When advocating on Capitol Hill in Austin...

- The legislator may be out of the office when you arrive. Be prepared to wait for him/her.
- You may have to return several times to catch the legislator.
- If you cannot catch the legislator in his/her office, ask the legislator's assistant if you can "pull him/her off the floor." Since legislators spend the bulk of their day in the legislative chamber, it is common practice to ask them to come out of the chamber for a brief meeting in the hall with constituents.
- Know what bills you want to ask that legislator to support or oppose—name them by title and number.

If you go as a group to meet with your legislator(s), designate one person as the lead spokesperson.

- That person simply makes sure the important points get raised, and she keeps the conversation on track if the legislator or participants get off track.
- If there are several issues, plan in advance who will raise each one so you are not repeating yourselves.

Open the meeting by establishing your credentials with the legislator and/or legislative aide.

- Each person should introduce herself and explain her connection to the legislator and his/her district. *Do you live in the district or work in the district? Did you grow up in the district, or do you have family in the district?*
- If the legislator has been of assistance to you, has supported a similar issue, or if there is a personal connection with the legislator, mention the circumstances and be sure to thank him/her.

Briefly explain the issue(s) you would like to discuss (e.g., Medicaid Expansion, Reproductive Choice, Domestic Violence).

- Explain why these issues are important to you and, if appropriate, others in the district. The more voters the legislator believes care about the issue, the more likely he/she is to pay attention.
- **Name the bills by number** and ask for the legislator's support or opposition.
- Be prepared with a sentence or two in support of or opposition to the bills about which you are speaking.

Support your facts with true stories.

- Have *brief* anecdotes and personal stories ready. These can be extremely compelling, particularly if they relate to the legislator's district.

Be specific about your request to the legislator, listen to his/her response, and ask again if necessary.

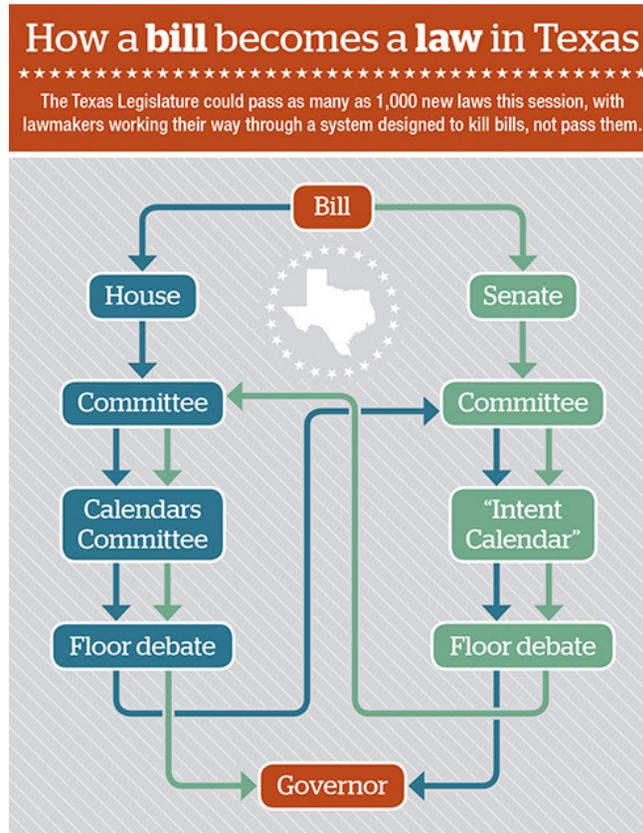
- For example, *will the legislator support the bill known as Victim Employment Safety and Security Act (VESSA)?* Also include the bill number if it is available.
- Listen carefully to his/her reply. **If you do not hear a commitment, you do not have one.** If he/she is asking for information you do not have, write down his/her request, and say you will get back to him/her. Include the information requested on your lobby report form.
- Be prepared to ask again if your first request is met with generalities.

Leave business cards and other materials behind.

- Get the name and title (or business cards) of any staff member(s) present at the meeting.
- Use this person as your primary contact in the future.

Follow up.

- **Send thank you letters** to the legislators and/or legislative aide(s) promptly, along with any information requested during the meeting.
- Respond to objections and concerns of the legislator or staff with additional information in your thank you letters.



Graphic courtesy of Community Impact Newspaper, which takes no positions on advocacy issues.