



# LEGISLATIVE TOOLKIT

Health Policy and Advocacy Committee 2023



“We in America do not have government by the majority.  
We have government by the majority who participate.”  
Thomas Jefferson



“Were there none who were discontented with what they have,  
the world would never reach anything better.”  
Florence Nightingale



“Reform can be accomplished only when attitudes are changed.”  
Lillian Wald

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## Get Involved, Stay Involved

Regardless of the level of your knowledge, interest or experience in legislation and policy making, there is always room—and a need—for you to grow. Get involved—and stay involved—for yourself, your patients and your profession!

Nurses comprise the largest segment of healthcare professionals, by far, and are the most trusted profession in America. Nurses' voices are desperately needed in our country's healthcare policy arena. Nurses have tremendous power that is derived from their numbers, their expertise and experience, and from the trust and respect people hold for them. Because of this, nurses are uniquely qualified as healthcare advocates. If nurses are not speaking up, somebody else will!

## Back to Basics

Laws exert a controlling influence on individuals, institutions and professions. Local, state and federal laws can wield both positive and negative effects. As nurses, laws can positively or negatively affect us, our patients and our profession. Legislators rely on experts, influencers, and their constituents, to help guide their decision making when considering legislation.

In order to effectively engage in the Legislative process, it is important to have an understanding of some of the basics. Here is a review of some important terms, structures and processes that are part of the legislative and policy arena.

- Policy—defined as “a course of action adopted and pursued by a government, ruler, political party, etc.” (Dictionary.com). Policies can reflect a group's principles, morality or culture; they guide decision-making. Policy is carried out through the laws, regulations and procedures that support them.
- Legislation—defined as “the act of making or enacting laws” (verb); “a law or a body of laws enacted (noun)” (Dictionary.com). The term “legislation” can mean both the process of legislating and also the resulting product.
- Legislator—defined as “a person who gives or makes laws” and “a member of a legislative body” (Dictionary.com). Also referred to as lawmakers.
- Legislature—defined as “a deliberative body of persons, usually elective, who are empowered to make, change, or repeal the laws of a country or state; the branch of government having the power to make laws” (Dictionary.com). The United States government is comprised of three branches: Legislative, Executive and Judicial. The Legislative branch is compiled of lawmakers.

- Bill—defined as “a form or draft of a proposed statute presented to a legislature, but not yet enacted or passed and made law” (Dictionary.com). A bill is a piece of legislation; it is an idea or recommendation for a law.
- Law—defined as “the principles and regulations established in a community by some authority and applicable to its people, whether in the form of legislation or of custom and policies recognized and enforced by judicial decision” (Dictionary.com). Laws govern behavior and action of individuals and institutions, and may impose penalties as a means of enforcement.
- Advocacy—defined as “the act of pleading for, supporting, or recommending; active espousal” (Dictionary.com). Advocates speak up on behalf of persons, places, things and ideas.
- Lobbying is defined as “to solicit or try to influence the votes of members of a legislative body” (Dictionary.com). Lobbyists attempt to persuade lawmakers to support laws that are advantageous to their special interest.

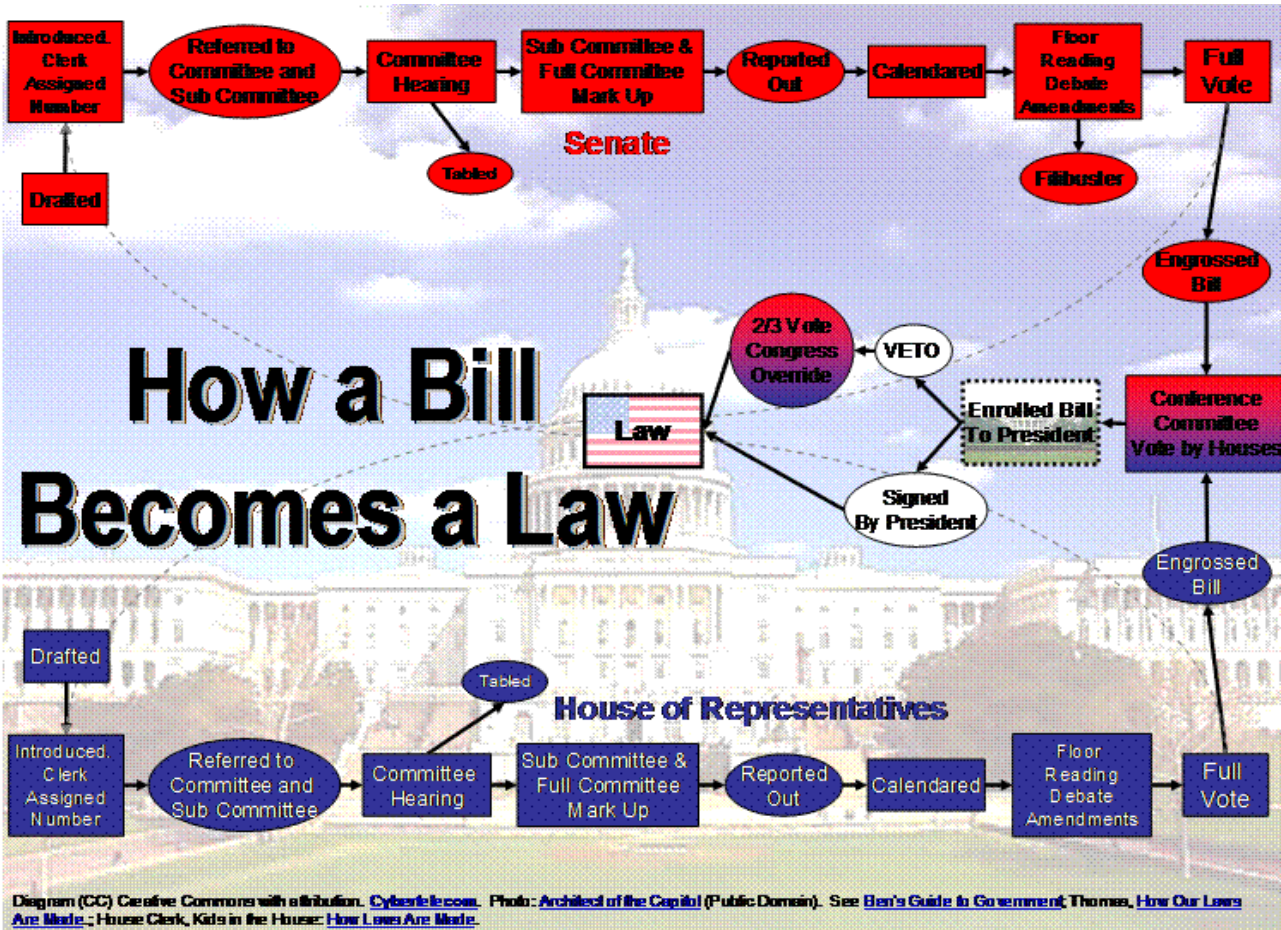
Lobbying and advocacy are similar, however, while lobbying is more formal— occurring mostly within the legislative system (e.g., helping write bills, testifying before lawmakers regarding specific actions)—advocacy is more informal—occurring mostly outside of the formal legislative system. Advocacy is a form of influence.

Florence Nightingale is quoted as saying, “What cruel mistakes are sometimes made by benevolent men and women in matters of business about which they can know nothing and think they know a great deal.” A key component of nurse advocacy is using our expertise and experience to inform and educate legislators on matters related to health, nursing and healthcare.

When it comes to influence, it is generally known that people are more easily persuaded by people they like or have something in common with; or with whom they have established a “give and take” relationship. To increase your effectiveness as an advocate, it is important to search for commonalities and areas of agreement between you and your representatives. These can extend outside of the policy arena; a shared hobby, interest, acquaintance, or affiliation. Find your common ground. Provide support—in one or more ways—so you are seen as someone they can rely upon and so they are incentivized to be seen that way by you.

# The US Government's Structure

## The Constitution



# Map Your Advocacy Impact Strategy

Answers to these simple questions will provide an effective **10-PART PLAN** to help you achieve important health policy changes and accountability



provides advocacy strategy development, skills training, small grant funding, peer mentoring, and technical assistance to make real health policy changes around the world. To date, we have reached: ● Over 600 individuals ● More than 100 organizations ● In 50+ countries

For more information, visit <http://sites.path.org/advocacyimpact> or email us at [advocacyimpact@path.org](mailto:advocacyimpact@path.org)

## What is your advocacy issue?

This is the first, and most critical, stage of the process. Your issue should be specific and clear, align with your organization's mission, and be realistically addressed through advocacy within five years. You'll also need evidence about why your issue is a problem.

## What is your advocacy goal?

This is your policy solution to the issue—or what you'd like a policymaker to do to address it. Describe the change you would like to see, how that change will happen, the timeframe, and which institution needs to act to make it happen.

## Who are the decision-makers & influencers?

Identify the specific decision-makers who have the power to give you what you want and the influencers who can persuade them to act. These are the individuals who can say yes or no to your goal, so be specific.

## What are their interests?

Try to understand your issue from each of your decision-makers' perspectives. Consider their level of awareness and current feelings about the issue and identify what might motivate them to be supportive. The most effective strategy will meet your decision-makers where they are and move them toward your point of view.

## What opposition & obstacles exist?

It's important to understand who may resist or oppose your goal in order to design tactics and messages to reduce their influence on key decision-makers. Also, identify obstacles—like competing priorities, political controversy, or insufficient resources—that might hinder progress.

## What are your advocacy assets & gaps?

Your assets are the skills, expertise, and resources you have to conduct advocacy activities. Conduct a thorough inventory of your assets, as well as anything you're missing to get the job done.

## Who are your key partners?

Be strategic about the partners you choose and how you partner with them. Good partners bring new constituents to an issue, demonstrate wide-scale support, improve your ability to reach and persuade a wider set of decision-makers, help mitigate opposition, and yield additional expertise, skills, and resources.

## What are your tactics?

Be selective about your advocacy tactics. The best activities are the ones most likely to have an immediate and direct impact on your target decision-makers or key influencers. When designing your tactics, consider whether they address your decision-makers' interests, help lessen the influence of any opposing groups, and align with your advocacy assets.

## What are the most powerful messages?

Use what you know about your decision-makers' interests to develop a compelling message about your advocacy goal. Your message should briefly introduce the issue, connect it to your decision-makers' interests, address the solution, and end with a clear "ask." It is important to also identify people who can deliver that message most effectively.

## How will you measure success?

Policy change can take time, so don't just focus on the end point of your goal. Develop measurement benchmarks along the way so you'll know you're making progress and to help you refine your advocacy strategy as needed.



<b>Advocating</b>	<b>Lobbying</b>	
	<b>Direct</b>	<b>Grassroots</b>
Identifying, embracing, and promoting a cause	Requesting legislators to take action on specific legislation	Urging others to contact their legislator requesting action on specific legislation

Source: Gear Up for Capitol Hill, ProLiteracy

**“Nursing is a progressive art such that to stand still is to go backwards.”  
—Florence Nightingale**

## **How to Get Involved**

There are many ways to provide influence on legislative and policy decision-making. By getting involved, you can have a positive impact on issues that matter most to nurses, and to you; things like quality and equity of care, patient and workplace safety, education and economics.

- First and foremost, VOTE!
- Donate to a candidate’s campaign, or join their campaign efforts.
- Educate yourself about the issues, especially those you care most about.
- Identify who your state assemblyperson, state and U.S. senator, and your U.S. representative are and communicate with them.
- Follow the progress of specific bills on state and national legislative websites.
- Join local, state and national nursing organizations and follow their advocacy and lobbying efforts.
- If you are really ready to jump in with both feet, consider running for office yourself!



## How to Get Connected

- Go to your legislator’s website and sign up for their newsletter.
- Participate in a Town Hall meeting or Teleconference.
- Engage with lawmakers on social media. Follow, like, share, and post short positive comments in support of the issues you agree about.
- Phone or email them. Introduce yourself and offer your assistance and expertise. Develop a relationship.

### Finding Your Legislators

**U.S. House of Representatives:**

<https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>

**U.S. Senate:**

<https://www.senate.gov/senators/senators-contact.htm>

**State Legislator (Assemblyman or Senator):**

Search, “Find My State Representative” or Find My State Senator” and follow the instructions on the website to search for your district.

### Finding and Following Legislation

**State Legislation:**

Search “Insert Your State’s Name Here” and “Legislation” to find information on specific bills

**Federal Legislation:**

Govtrack: <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/browse>

Congress.gov: <https://www.congress.gov/help/faq/find-bills-by-subject>



**“So never lose an opportunity of urging a practical beginning, however small, for it is wonderful how often in such matters the mustard-seed germinates and roots itself.” —Florence Nightingale**

## **Make Your Voice Heard**

It is important for nurses to be a part of the healthcare policy dialogue in order to maintain and enhance nurses’ pivotal role in the delivery of healthcare, and to protect the interests of themselves, their patients and their profession.

Are your legislators paying attention to your interests? Legislators care about how their own constituents feel about issues. When your legislator goes to vote on proposed legislation, he or she wants to know how many constituents back home called or wrote for or against an issue. They are trying to be experts on numerous issues, and they are hearing the opinions of many groups. Legislators love hearing from constituents who are experts in the healthcare arena. Nurses are well received and their perspectives are valued.

Policy decisions are also made by the Executive Branch. Calling or writing a particular cabinet member’s office or the Governor of your state to register your opinion could influence the policy making process.

When talking or writing to legislators, be concise.

- Claim your expertise and authority as a nurse.
- Clearly state the issue you are contacting them about (aka your “ask”).
- Provide a story that illustrates your position (aka an emotional hook).
- Provide supporting data.
- Restate your “ask”.
- Thank them for their time.

## Most Effective Methods of Contact in Descending Order

Face to Face Individual Visit
Poll of the District
Face to Face Group Visit
Telephone Call
Handwritten Letters
Emails
Resolution Passed by an Organization
Petition
News report of a group or individual position
Form Letter

## How to Contact Your Legislator

Lawmakers want to hear from their constituents. Lawmakers also need to hear from others outside of their districts to gauge the widespread concern of an issue. Elected officials often do not like to deal with “hot” (controversial) issues. If a grassroots swell of opposition to a controversial issue occurs, legislators will try to avoid addressing that issue with a public vote. Here’s the order in which contact with your legislator will have the greatest effect:

### 1. Begin with Elected Officials from Your District

Your voter registration card will indicate your districts for county, state and federal offices. Or you can search for them online. *For state bills, your local state representative and senator should be contacted early and often.*

### 2. Contact Committee Members

As a bill moves through the process, it is heard by different House and Senate Committees. Call your state’s bill tracking service, the sponsor’s office or the committee offices to get current information on the next step for the bill as well as the hearing dates and times. This information can also be found on your state or the federal website.

### 3. Contact Newly Elected Legislators

National interest is high for issues related to health, healthcare and healthcare workforce. Nurses have worked hard to educate, befriend and gain support from incumbent members. Those who are sympathetic to our issues will continue to work with us. Those who oppose our policy goals won’t be likely to change their minds. It is the newly elected member who needs to hear our side more than any other. You can obtain this list by calling your state clerk’s office.

#### **4. Contact the Governor, President and/ or Speaker**

These are the most powerful legislators in the state or federal government. The Senate President Pro Tempore and Speaker of the House are not only leaders of their chambers; they are also leaders of their party. They have the power to direct issues that they want promoted or killed. The Governor is the one to either sign or veto a bill that has passed both chambers. The Governor is sensitive to the people's will, though his or her decision is not quite as dependent on public sentiment as individual legislators. These leaders are also averse to dealing with highly controversial issues. Don't leave them out when you write or call. They are key to the process and can make or break the passage of a bill with a phone call.

## **Making the Connection**

### **Tips for Personal Visits**

Plan ahead. Appointments can take days to weeks to get scheduled. Find the contact information for your legislator's office. Look for their scheduler's contact information online or call the office and request it. When calling for an appointment, tell the office the reason for your visit, including the title and number of the bill you want to discuss if applicable. Once you have the scheduler's contact information, create an email or letter including your full name, title and/or degrees, email address, phone number, and any other information that is relevant—including the reason you are requesting the meeting, aka your "ask". Send written communication via FAX or email. Follow-up the next day to confirm your message was received. If necessary, follow-up again a week later. Never be rude or demanding, but be persistent. If your purpose is time sensitive, explain that to the scheduler. If a visit can't be scheduled within the needed time frame it is appropriate to leave a message or write an email.

Arrive on time and be patient as demands on their time are high, especially during session. Be prepared with your information. Whenever possible, provide a story that illustrates the issue and creates an emotional hook. Prepare a one-page handout with your talking points to leave with the legislator or legislative aide. Offer to obtain additional information if necessary. Ask for support on your issue and get a commitment if possible. Thank the member and office staff for their time. Following the meeting, send a written personal thank you that also re-iterate your "ask". Follow up calls are a means of continuing the relationship. If the member votes in your favor, a reply of thanks is in order.

### **Tips for Virtual Meetings**

Virtual meetings are almost as convenient as a phone call, and they have the potential added benefit of a face-to-face connection. As with the personal visit, it is important to be "on-time" for your meeting, and to agree on where you are meeting; that means choosing a virtual platform, deciding who will initiate the meeting, and ensuring that everyone involved in the meeting have the appropriate technology available and activated on their devices. For the best visual presentation, wear solid clothing, have lighting coming from the front and not your back, and consider what will be in seen your background. You may choose to use a background screen for more privacy. You can choose not to share video during your meeting, but in doing

so you will lose the added value of the human face. If you anticipate noise distractions during your meeting, mute yourself when you are not actively sharing. Just remember to un-mute when you are ready to talk. As with all methods of contact, be as concise as possible, keep meeting time to around 15 minutes, and be sure to thank the people involved in your meeting for their time.

### **Tips for Telephoning**

Your goal when calling a legislator is to provide the key pieces of information he or she needs; your full name, your city and county, and the reason for your call—communicating the issue is and your position as concisely as possible. It is very important that the office know that you are a constituent **and** that you are a nurse. Staff assistants answer most calls to the legislator’s office. Since others will be trying to reach your legislator as well, you may not get through the first time you try. Call back or try a different time of day if the line is busy. Again, persistence may be required. When your call is answered, ask to speak to the person who handles health care legislation for the legislator. If that person is not available, leave your message with whoever can speak with you.

### **Sample Call to Legislator**

Hello, this is (INSERT YOUR NAME HERE) and I am a Registered Nurse (INSERT YOUR CITY NAME HERE). May I speak with the person who handles health care issues? I am calling because I want Senator/ Representative (INSERT LEGISLATOR’S NAME HERE) to know that I am very concerned about (INSERT ISSUE HERE- *describe the issue, detailing how the bill will affect your role in health care*). It is critical that the Senator/Representative *SUPPORT / OPPOSE* the issue ((INSERT NAME OR BILL NUMBER/ DESCRIPTION HERE) because (INSERT REASON HERE- *give one to three very brief reasons, such as “We can all save money without sacrificing the quality of health care if the provision passes” or “We nurses are already trained to provide this service.”*) Many of my nursing colleagues share my concern regarding this.

Please make sure that (the Senator/ Representative) knows that I (*SUPPORT/ OPPOSE Bill or issue name*). Thank you for your time.

Provide your name, address, phone number and/ or email address so that the legislator can respond to you.

### **Tips for Writing**

Legislators take note of all letters from their constituents, but they may devote the most attention to letters that are original (not mass produced). Letters, and other correspondences, that provide a local context—a story that creates an emotional hook—carry much more weight with legislators than a standard form letter. It is important to clearly identify your subject matter and viewpoint by making a key statement in a single paragraph or using bold or underline for emphasis. Letters provide the opportunity to say more than you might be able to say during a brief telephone call, but you do not want your message to become lost by providing too much information or by covering too many topics in the letter.

## Sample Letter to a Legislator

July 4, 2014

The Honorable Jane Adams  
(Address)

Dear Representative Adams:

As a Registered Nurse living in your district, I see every day how important the children's health provision in the Health Care Reorganization Act, HB 1234, would be in making sure that children receive preventive health care. Nurses and other health care providers spend great amounts of time caring for children who might not be sick if they had preventive health care. The emergency room visits resulting from inadequate preventive care cost society an inordinate amount of money. This money could be spent on other important things if children have access to preventive care!

I urge you to support the children's health provision in HB1234.

Thank you for your help in this important legislation. Our state's nurses are working hard to support responsible health care policies.

Sincerely,  
Nancy Nurse, RN

### **Tips for Emailing**

Email is a fast, easy and efficient way to communicate with legislators. When sending an email, use these tips:

1. In the subject line, state that you are a constituent
2. State your idea or request concisely. Keep it short.
3. Provide a story that relates to the issue to create an emotional hook.
4. If sending a group email, add personal elements wherever possible.
5. Ask colleagues to send similar emails. There is power in numbers.
6. Follow up with a call, memo or visit.
7. Communicate more than once to establish an ongoing relationship.

### **Tips for Engaging on Social Media**

Social Media is an important addition to the way we communicate. Here are some tips for engaging with legislators on social media.

1. Follow your legislators on whatever social media platforms you have in common.
2. Repost, Share, Like, or provide a short comment in support of issues you agree with.
3. By following their posts, you can learn more about the issues your legislators care most about, events they are attending, and where you may have common ground.

## Quick Reference Guide

American Nurses Association (ANA) Advocacy Toolkit: <https://ana.aristotle.com/SitePages/toolkit.aspx>

ANA, Government Affairs: <http://www.nursingworld.org/MainMenuCategories/Policy-Advocacy>

ANA Capitol Beat: <https://anacapitolbeat.org/>

ANA Health Policy: <https://www.nursingworld.org/practice-policy/health-policy/>

ANA Political Action Committee: <https://ana.aristotle.com/sitepages/pac.aspx/>

Congressional Bills: <https://www.govinfo.gov/help/bills>

Congress.gov: <https://www.congress.gov/help/faq/find-bills-by-subject>

Contacting Elected Officials: <http://www.usa.gov/Agencies.shtml>

Fednet: <http://www.fednet.net/>

Federal Register: <https://www.federalregister.gov/>

Govtrack: <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/browse>

National Academy of Medicine: <https://nam.edu/>

The White House: [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov)

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services: <https://www.hhs.gov/>

U.S. House of Representatives: <https://www.house.gov/>

U.S. Senate: <https://www.senate.gov/>

U.S. Capitol: Phone: 202-224-3121

**“Rather, ten times, die in the surf, heralding the way to a new world, than stand idly on the shore.”—Florence Nightingale**