



What You Can and Cannot Do in Nonprofit Advocacy

(Adapted from Washington Nonprofits and “The Board Advocacy Project”)

You may NOT:

- ✓ Endorse a candidate
- ✓ Make a campaign contribution to or an expenditure for a candidate
- ✓ Rate candidates on who is most favorable to their issue
- ✓ Let candidates use any of its facilities or resources, unless those resources are made equally available to all candidates at their fair market value

You may:

- ✓ Provide information, such as:
 1. background/history
 2. statistics and evaluations (collect & interpret)
 3. budget estimates
 4. what changes in a law would mean
 5. stories of people or situations
- ✓ Educate the public (provided that your activities are nonpartisan).
- ✓ Register voters (provided that your activities are nonpartisan).
- ✓ Endorse ballot measures.
- ✓ Join groups or coalitions as “informational members”.
- ✓ Influence unions as to their positions; participate through unions.
- ✓ Exert influence through membership on faith community committees or as part of professional organizations.
- ✓ Encourage family members to play active roles.
- ✓ Participate in local, state, or national advocacy groups.
- ✓ Serve on non-profit agency boards.
- ✓ Educate legislators: invite them to agencies, prepare and conduct site visits etc.
- ✓ Do a lot on your own time (lobby, knock on doors, make personal campaign contributions).
- ✓ Encourage people to vote.
- ✓ Aid in issue campaigns, provide reports, statistics, etc.
- ✓ Explain Regulations and how they are developed.
- ✓ Help others understand the process as well as specific bills/policies.
- ✓ Contribute to newsletters of non-profit groups.
- ✓ Speak at classes, congregations, PTAs, or other community groups.
- ✓ Compile and publish voting records (as long as you avoid the appearance of endorsing or opposing candidates based on their votes. Publishing voting records in the midst of an election campaign could cross the line into “electioneering”, especially if your organization does not regularly publish voting records.)
- ✓ Organize candidate forums (as long as all candidates are treated fairly and impartially and the forum addresses a broad range of issues. It can focus on one general topic, such as economic policy, but not on one specific issue, such as the minimum wage. It must have a nonpartisan person as the moderator.
- ✓ Conduct a questionnaire or public opinion poll (Your organization may inform candidates of your position on particular issues and urge them to pledge their support on record. Candidates may distribute their responses, but your organization cannot. This also holds true for statements made by the candidate to the media. Your organization can distribute such statements following the election.)
- ✓ Distribute “tools” like Voter Registration forms, League of Women Voter pamphlets (called “TRY’s” - They Represent You).