



# Advocacy 101

United Way of Pierce County

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# Background: Why do we do advocacy?

Some basics about what we believe:

1. Poverty is a systemic issue, not an individual one.
2. Poverty is created by oppressions such as racism and sexism, but *maintained and codified* by public policies.
3. People affected most by poverty know what they need, but often lack (or are prevented from accessing) the tools needed to successfully move out of poverty.
4. The people most impacted by poverty should lead our public policy campaigns.
5. Policy campaigns should do more than just win policies; they should build leaders and change power dynamics.



# Advocacy ≠ Lobbying

Well, kind of...not all advocacy is lobbying, but all lobbying is advocacy.

Here's what the law says: Advocacy is defined as any action that speaks in favor of, recommends, argues for a cause, supports or defends, or pleads on behalf of others (*courtesy of Alliance for Justice*).

Some examples: organizing, citizen lobby days, rallies, voter registration, regulatory actions, speaking out on specific legislation

Today's focus: advocacy on specific state legislation



# Wonk, wonk, wonk

## Some common advocacy terms:

**Grassroots:** The process of communicating with the general public and asking them to contact their local, state or federal officials regarding a certain issue.

**Direct lobbying:** The process of directly appealing to legislators on an issue (usually by a group)

## Some common session terms and definitions:

**Bill:** A draft of proposed law.

**In Committee:** A bill goes through several committees before it goes to the floor of each chamber for a vote. Most bills go through a policy committee, a fiscal committee, the Rules committee, and then to the floor.

**The Floor:** Literally and figuratively, the floor of each chamber where branches of the legislature vote on various bills.

**Executive Session:** A bill can pass out of a committee during an executive session. Wonks say “the bill was exec-ed.”

**Cut-off:** The date in the session by which a bill must be “exec-ed” out of a committee or voted off the floor or else it is “dead.”

**Dead for the session:** A bill can “die” during the legislative session for a variety of reasons—it may not have enough votes to pass through committee and into the next phase of the legislative process, or a committee may not like a particular bill and refuse to act on it at all, effectively killing the bill by doing nothing. A bill can even die on the House or Senate floor if it does not reach enough votes to be passed.

**NTIB:** Necessary to Implement Budget. This is a common way that bills can be revived after a cut-off; a bill could be deemed NTIB, allowing it to proceed through the budgeting process without having met its cut-off deadlines.



# How to be an advocate

Many, many options for being an advocate! The legislative session is a good time to practice. Here are some easy ways:

- Sign up for an action alert and email legislators
- Call the legislative hotline (1-800-562-6000)
- Meet with legislators – early & often!
- Testify on issues where you are an expert or that you feel strongly about

**Let's practice!**



# Easy, peasy actions! (part 1)

Call the legislative hotline (1-800-562-6000)

Seriously, remember this number. It's an easy action and it makes a difference.

Make your call now in real time!



## Easy, peasy actions! (part 2)

### Meeting with a legislator/testifying:

- Say who you are
- Say why you're here ("I'm here to support house bill...")
- Share a brief personal or organizational story
- Relate your story to the bill ("This bill would impact me/my community by...")
- **MAKE AN ASK!** ("Can we count on you...?")



Thank you!

Questions?

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