

# TOOLKIT FOR INTERFAITH AND ECUMENICAL ADVOCATES

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## Advocacy Introduction

Advocacy pleads the cause of another. As people of faith, we are called to engage in the process of advocacy in our communities. We do this by working with our elected officials to ensure that the policies of our government support the needs of those living on the margins in our nation and world. When we work to change the underlying structures and policies that perpetuate poverty, we create justice and peace in our society.

We invite your commitment in advocating for public policies that support the well-being of all life and nature, in particular for the marginalized, disenfranchised and vulnerable among us. Let us together work to support public policy that allows everyone to live with dignity and as self-sufficiently as possible. Let us seek out opportunities to stay informed on policy matters and take action with other faith communities. The annual Eastern Washington Legislative Conference is one venue for staying informed. Other resources are legislative alerts, candidate forums, lobby days and advocacy trainings.

*Do not eat or sleep when your neighbor is hungry.*  
~ Quran

*How long will you defend the unjust and favor the wicked? Defend the cause of the weak and the orphan, maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed, rescue the weak and vulnerable; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.*  
~ Psalm 82:2-4

*And God will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."*  
~ Matthew 25:40

## Be Prepared

What issue(s) do I want to work on?

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What do I need to know about this issue? -

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Where can I find that information?

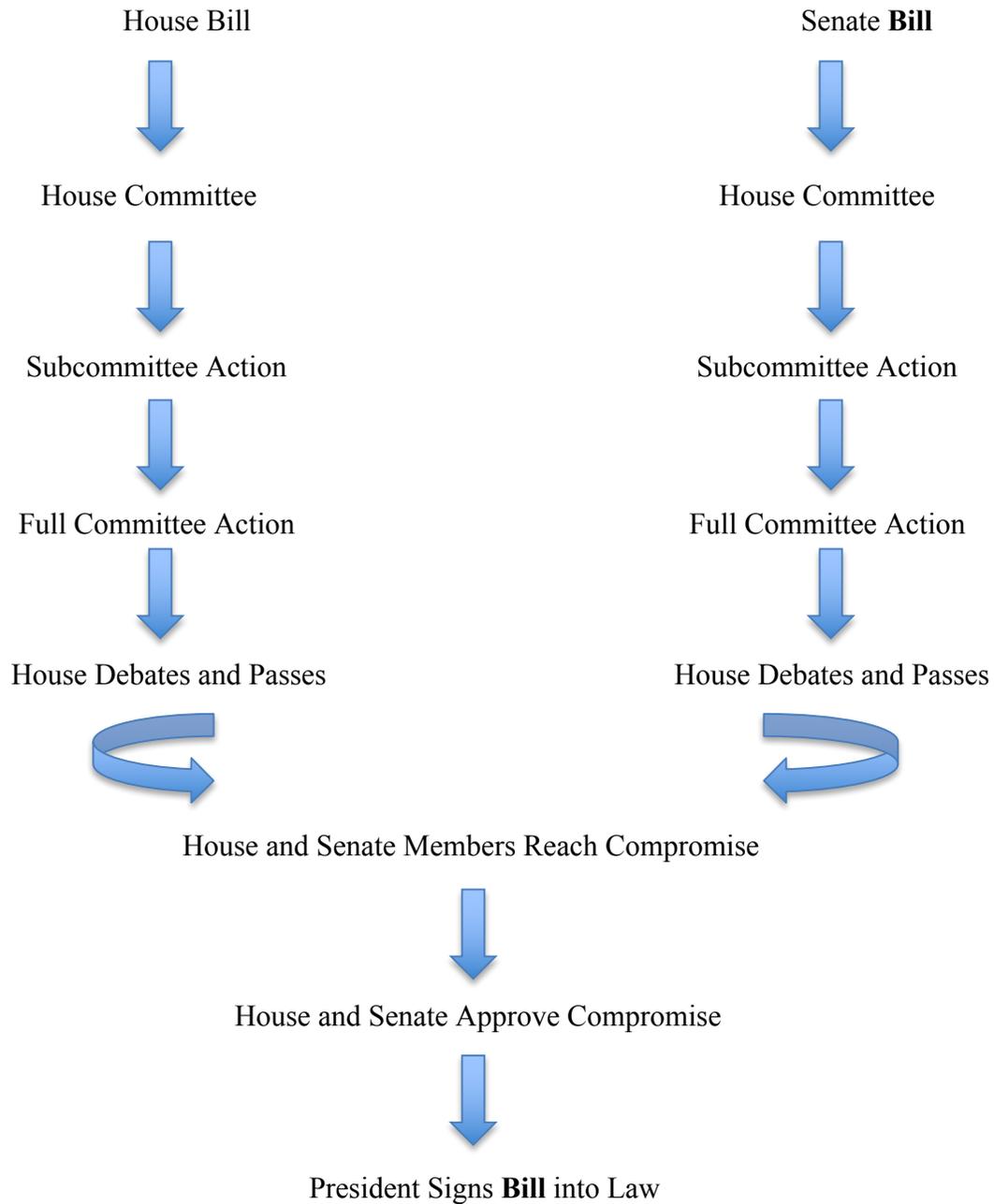
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## Get to know your legislators

Do you know the people who represent you? Think about the specific interests of your lawmakers, the organizations they belong to, their community connections, legislative committees and voting records on your issue.

## U.S. Congress : *How a Bill Becomes a Law*



### State Legislature

In the Washington State Legislature, bills go through a similar process to become law. The State House and Senate do not have subcommittees. After a bill is passed out of committee, it must then be voted out of the House or Senate Rules Committee to be debated and voted on by the full House or Senate. Once the House and Senate approve the bill compromise, the Governor can sign the bill into law.

## Phone Calls to Your Legislators

|                          |                                |                |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------|
| <u>Washington State:</u> | Toll free Legislative Hotline  | 1-800-562-6000 |
| <u>U.S. Congress:</u>    | U.S. Congressional Switchboard | 1-202-224-3121 |

### Making Effective Phone Calls

- Leave your message with the legislative assistant or for Congress speak with the staffer handling the issue. Be sure to get their name for future reference (particularly for Congress).
- Identify yourself by your name, district, hometown and organization if applicable.
- Be specific about what you want the legislator to do.
- Ask what the legislator's position is on the issue. If the staff person is uncertain, ask the staffer to ask the legislator to get back to you. Give them your contact information.
- Thank them for their time.
- You may follow up with a short note to the staff member with whom you spoke, emphasizing your position and your appreciation for his/her attention to the issue.
- Phone call to US Congress are most effective 1-2 days from vote

### Sample Phone Message

Hi. My name is Jane Doe and I live in the 3<sup>rd</sup> District. I am a member of the *Faith Community Name*. I'm calling to ask the Representative to restore funding in the budget for Adult Dental Care to 300,000 elderly, disabled, blind, and/or low-income parents. Providing basic dental care ensures the health of our communities and is more cost-effective than expensive emergency procedures. Does the Representative support funding for adult dental care? Please let me know. My address is 123 Main St., my phone number is 555-1212 and my email is \_\_\_\_\_. What is your name again? Thank you for your time.

## Writing Your Legislators

Use a letter format and send it by

### Sending an email

Washington State Legislature

[www.leg.wa.gov](http://www.leg.wa.gov)

U.S. Congress

[www.congress.org](http://www.congress.org)

## Writing Effective Letters

- Write your letter legibly by hand or on a computer.
- Include your name and address in the body of the letter to confirm you are a constituent.
- Use letterhead if you are writing on behalf of an organization.
- Be brief but personal. Share your knowledge and experience. Describe how the issue will affect you. Letters should not exceed one page.
- Ask the legislator to take specific action, either to cosponsor a piece of legislation, vote for or against legislative, sign a Dear Colleague letter, etc. Underline or **bold** this request in your letter. Write only to your representative—offices remove letters from non-constituents.
- When you receive a response from your Congressperson, check to see if she/he has responded to what you asked. If she/he has not, then write again.
- When sending your letter as an email, putting the letter in the body of the email is probably best. However another option is to include the formal letter as an attachment. Also when sending an email consider your timing so it arrives before a vote.

## Sample Letter

Date

Senator Judy Smith

Address

Dear Senator Smith,

*[Introduce yourself, your community ties, why you are writing.]*

I am a member of the Faith Action Network. I write to you today because I am concerned about the alarming rate of hunger in Washington and want you to vote in favor of Keep Washington Working bill or the 100% Clean Energy bill

*[Share your experience and information and how the bill will affect you. Ask them to do something specific.]*

I am a third grade teacher and have seen the effects of hunger in my classroom. Students who are hungry have difficulty concentrating in class, which puts them behind the other students in their coursework. The Act for Hungry Families addresses this problem by guaranteeing that any elementary school child who qualifies for free or reduced-price meals can eat during the day. The bill also ensures that people have better access to food assistance programs and eases administrative burdens at DSHS. I ask you to support the Keep Washington Working bill or the 100% Clean Energy bill.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to hearing from you on this issue.

Sincerely,

Name

Address

## Visits with Elected Officials

### Schedule a Meeting with your Elected Official

- Call your official's office. Their contact information is at [www.leg.wa.gov](http://www.leg.wa.gov) or call the legislative hotline. When you call, ask for the scheduler to set up a meeting. Introduce yourself and/or your organization. Be specific about what you want to discuss. You may need to send this request in writing.
- Follow up on your request and be persistent. Call again if you are not contacted in a week.

### Get Ready for Your Meeting

- Prepare for the meeting. You do not need to be an expert, but should be familiar with basics and talking points of the issue. Read the biography of the elected official so that you know who you are talking to. Research their positions or actions on the issue.
- Establish a format for how you will lead the meeting. You may want to have different members of the group speak to specific issues, help facilitate the meeting, and/or open and close the meeting. This allows for more participation from the group

### Visit Your Elected Official – meetings are brief – prepare for 15 minutes or less

- *Introduce yourself and your local links* (groups associated with, member of a board, etc.). Say what issue and/or legislation you want to talk about. Limit your visit to one or two topics.
- *Find something to thank them for.* If you like how they've voted, mention it. It is a good to know your member's voting record on the issue before you meet.
- *Get the member or legislative assistant to talk.* Ask for the member's position on the bill and why. Do they support specific amendments? How will they vote? This will give you a framework to shape your dialogue and address their concerns.
- *Ask for something more and something specific.* Open with a specific request. If they are already on your side, ask them for more: to take greater leadership, to talk with other legislators, etc. Present your need and request for the member.
- *Stay on message.* Don't be put off by smokescreens or long-winded answers. Keep them on point. Be polite, courteous and a good listener, not argumentative. Be in control.
- *Speak from your experience.* If you have personal experience with the issue, share your story. You do not need to be an expert. Bring as many facts as you feel comfortable with to the table, but give stories from your experiences if possible.
- *Present supporting documents,* such as relevant editorials or faith community statements. Underline or highlight the most relevant portions of the document and reference the information as you hand it to them. Relate situations in their district to the legislation.
- *Close the deal.* Get a commitment on your request. If it's yes, then you're done. If not, ask what the member needs in order to do what you want. Then follow up on those concerns.
- *Continue to build the relationship.* Relationships go through ups and downs. Send a thank you note. Keep in contact with the staffer as you receive new information or as votes approach. After the vote, give your member feedback: thank them or express your concerns if they voted against an amendment you support.

## Toolkit Sources

### Online Advocacy Tools:

FAN Advocacy Toolkit:

FANWA.org/advocacy/advocacytoolkit

League of Women Voters Spokane:

lwspokane.org

## Online Resources from Eastern WA Legislative Conference

### Participants

Catholic Diocese

dioceseofspokane.org

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

disciplesnw.org

Congregation Emmanu-el

spokaneemanu-el.org

Earth Ministry

earthministry.org

Episcopal Diocese

spokanediocese.org

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

ewaidsynod.org

Fuse Washington

fusewashing.org

Intercommunity Peace and Justice Center

ipjc.org

Morningstar Baptist Church

msbcspokane.com

Responsible Growth NE Washington

rgnew.org

Presbyterian Church (USA)

presbyinw.org

Save the Children Action Network

savethechildrennetwork.org/state/Washington

Silver Valley Community Resource Center

silvervalleyaction.org

Spokane Low Income Housing Consortium (SLIHC)

slihc.org

Tenants Union of Washington State

tenantsunion.org

United Church of Christ (UCC)

pncucc.org

United Methodist Church

pnwumc.org

Upper Columbia United Tribes (UCUT)

ucut.org

World Relief Spokane

worldreliefspokane.org

### Sponsors and Financial Contributors

The Fig Tree

thefigtree.org

Catholic Charities of Eastern Washington

cceasternwa.org

Faith Action Network

fanwa.org

Inland District of the United Methodist Church

pnwumc.org/inland-district

NAACP

naacpspokane.org

Sisters of St Francis of Philadelphia

osfphila.org

Spokane Valley United Methodist Church

spokanevalleychurch.org

Thrivent Financial, Mark Kinney

<https://connect.thrivent.com/mark-kinney>

Washington Catholic Conference of Bishops

wacatholic.org