

# How to Get things done in Santa Fe

John Garcia

## ADVOCACY 101

### What is Advocacy?

Webster's defines advocacy as "the act of speaking, writing, or acting in support of something or someone." It is articulating your views on proposed laws, regulations, and policies that affect you, your family, and community. Advocacy is best accomplished by having many people voice their concerns

### Public Advocacy

Public advocacy is educating the general public about an issue so that they will better understand and sympathize with your cause. Every time you speak to a group of individuals about your organization or issue concerning the value of the arts in society, you are doing public advocacy.

### Legislative Advocacy

This is what most people think of when they hear the word advocacy. Legislative advocacy is working to influence legislation on a local, state, or national level. This includes legislation to provide additional funding or to create or improve outreach services. Doing legislative advocacy is not difficult.

### Advocacy Tips

**Be informed.** Read legislative/advocacy alerts carefully. Know both sides of an issue. Know when a bill is in committee, when the hearing will be held, and who the co-sponsors are.

**Start early.** Pay attention to issues and proposals early in the process.

**Be concise.** State your position simply and clearly because you will have a better chance of getting people to listen and respond.

**Be specific.** Know what you want from your legislator – to draft legislation, propose an amendment, or vote for a bill.

**Be honest.** Don't exaggerate the facts. Every issue has two sides – be honest about acknowledging the pros and cons of your issue.

**Give personal examples.** This puts your issue in human terms. Speak from your heart – give real examples of what your issue has meant to you personally. It is much more powerful than giving dry statistics.

**Continue to communicate.** Keep others informed of your progress and meetings so that follow-up action can be planned.

**Be courteous.** Always remember to thank legislators for their time and interest, even when they disagree with your position.

**Be firm and confident.** You are expressing your belief about a particular issue. Be confident in your convictions.

**Do not give up.** Just because your particular legislator may not be supportive, others working with you may have more success. Advocacy is an educational process and takes time.

## How to Influence the Legislative Process

### Define the Issue

#### Join or Form a Coalition

- Identify others interested in your cause.
- Identify the opposition.

### Development of a Bill

- Identify and contact key legislator(s) in drafting the language.
- Identify and contact co-sponsors.
- Utilize the media.

### Attend Public Hearings

- Prepare testimony.
- Make phone calls.
- Utilize the media.

### Maintain Constituent Pressure

- Write letters.
- Make phone calls.
- Encourage others to write and call.
- Utilize the media.

### Floor Votes

- Continue advocating.
- Advocate around amendments.

### Governor's Signature or Veto

- More letters and phone calls.
- Follow up and send thank-you notes.

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## Tips for Successful Public Testimony

**Accurate** When using statistics to back up any testimony, make certain that they are correct and up to date. Accuracy also means sticking to the issue at hand.

**Logical** Present your testimony in a logical order. Make a statement describing the issue or problem and give your position. State how your position helps solve the problem and recommend reasonable actions to resolve the issue.

**Dignified** Pay attention to protocol. In New Mexico, protocol is extremely important and must be followed at all times. This includes greeting the committee appropriately (Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and committee members) and following that protocol throughout your presentation.

**Useful** Don't waste time. The best testimony provides decision-makers with useful information they did not have which serves to resolve the issue at hand. If you have a solution, make it a part of your testimony. Make sure beforehand that whatever you recommend is amenable to others in your group.

**Short** If you cannot get your point across in three minutes or less, you will most likely be cut off before you are finished. Short, concise, and well-delivered testimonies are received more favorably, making the testifier appear knowledgeable and capable. Irrelevant and repetitive testimony has the opposite effect.

**Heartfelt** Presenting your testimony in human terms stirs emotions whether it hits at the gut level or goes for the throat. Emotions are best stirred in testimony delivered by individuals who are directly affected by the issue.

*The New Mexico Legislature is organized on a partisan basis. Members of the Republican and Democratic parties in each chamber meet in caucus before a session begins to organize themselves. Most of the work of the legislature takes place in bipartisan committees. Standing committees meet during sessions, and interim committees meet between sessions. Committees vary in size, reflecting chamber-wide party strength. Committee chairs have power and flexibility in guiding committee business and expediting or delaying legislation.*

## Guerilla Tactics for the "not so" faint of heart...

1. **Legislative Council Services** draft bills on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor. Know how to start the process (Bill Jacket), sponsor lined up, be able to present the bills "intention", suggest draft language, make friends.
2. **Interim Committees** is the place to start. Interim committees meet in the off-season and give you a chance to present legislation and get support. Many times, an interim committee will support a recommendation and then it sails through the session.
3. **112 Legislators**, 20 committees. Don't waste your time on 112, focus on the 20 (Committee Chairs)! In fact, keep it to 6. House Speaker, Senate Pro-Tempore, Senate Minority Leader, Senate Majority Leader, House Minority Leader and House Majority Leader. This is where the "Movida" happens.
4. **Tea Leaves Talk**, listen to the roars and the whispers. The Legislature is a swarm of egos, insecurities, wall flies and those that know. Your friends are staffers, lobbyists, media and others who you'll need to filter the messages from and find reality.
5. **Caucus, Conference and Closed-Door** sessions are critical. Word gets out quick from these meetings and knowing what was said helps with both strategy and tactical awareness.
6. **Companion Bills/ Dummy Bills** are your friend. Running similar bills in the House and Senate double your odds of success, however Bill sponsors aren't usually happy about doing that. Dummy Bills hold a place for bills "under the radar."
7. **House Speaker/ Senate Protempore** control committee and bill assignment. Get to know them and work them about process (eg. How many committee assignments for a bill). Become a "resource" for them. (eg. Expert witness, Industry expert...)
8. **"Clean up Language"** and other nomenclatures are terms used to determine the significance of a bill. How you characterize bills really matter. It is important to be honest, ethical and professional.
9. **Fourth Floor**, also know as the Governor can call legislation, sign legislation, veto or pocket veto bills. Knowing and influencing the "fourth floor" can help; being regarded as an expert helps with credibility. Knowing where she/ he stands matters.
10. **Make Friends!** Your reputation and credibility are at stake; being respectful and always helpful. For me like you, your database is critical to success! Aloha