

You Can Shape Policy

The right (and the obligation!) to advocate is a bedrock value in American democracy. Artists, arts organizations, contributors and audiences all are stakeholders in decisions that are made about public policy. This edition of The Practical Advocate offers guidance on how you, as an arts advocate, can use your voice and your passion for the arts to maximum effect.



Where Do I Start?

The best way to begin advocating is to **introduce yourself to your local and state elected officials**. Lawmakers need to hear what constituents think, so establish contact (via a personal visit or a phone call, letter or email) and convey that the arts are important to your community. [Three Simple Ways to Advocate for the Arts](#) and [Meetings Matter!](#) provide how-to tips.

Make the community impact of your work visible. When public funds are being used, elected officials need to see how they positively benefit people in your community. Be certain to highlight the civic, educational, economic, social or health benefits of your work along with your artistic achievements. Do your website and social media channels emphasize how your community is a stronger place by virtue of your work? Tell your story!

Get connected so you'll know when key votes or actions are pending. Plug in to your [state arts agency](#)'s mailing list and social media channels and become a member of your state's citizen advocacy organization.

Do...

- **Be creative.** More than most advocates, the arts community has the skills to humanize policy issues and help people understand the importance of our cause. Bring your stories to life with impactful images and language.
- **Share the facts.** Supplement your story with research on the benefits of the arts to communities.
- **Be positive.** It's more effective to start advocating *for* an issue rather than against a position. When there is a specific bill that requires action, you can express opposition to or support for that legislation. Until then, the most effective thing you can do is communicate a positive message about the importance of the arts to your community.

Cite the Evidence

[Five Reasons to Support the Arts](#)

[Arts and Economic Recovery](#)

[Why Should Government Support the Arts?](#)

Don't...

- **Don't vilify.** Attacking anyone's political, social or religious beliefs will not convert them to your point of view or make them feel proud to support your cause. Cultivating "panpartisan" support is the best way to grow public funding for the arts.
- **Don't get discouraged.** Your voice matters! There is nothing that captures the attention of an elected official more than contact from a local constituent. If that power is used strategically, support for the arts can flourish over time.

National Assembly of State Arts Agencies

The National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that serves America's state arts agencies. We are a clearinghouse for data about public funding for the arts and research on the work of state arts agencies. For more information, visit www.nasaa-arts.org.

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