

# Advocacy 101 – Do's and Don'ts

## Advocacy is Critical

- ▶ Privilege and responsibility to contact Texas legislators about issues important to you
- ▶ Regular sessions meet only once a biennium but offices are open year-round
- ▶ You are the experts
- ▶ “I didn’t hear from anyone”
- ▶ 5.4 million students / largest item in state budget

# Advocacy 101 – Do's and Don'ts

## How can my voice be heard?

- ▶ Determine who represents you
- ▶ Phone call
- ▶ Personal visits
- ▶ Correspondence – email or written
- ▶ Provide public testimony
- ▶ Know the basics of the process – Congress vs. Texas Legislature

# Advocacy 101 – Do's and Don'ts

## Who represents me?

- ▶ Generally speaking, you want to contact only *your* legislator on issues/bills as they respond to their own constituents who elect them
- ▶ Texas House website, “Who Represents Me,” provides House, Senate and congressional representatives
- ▶ Exception: committees when hearing or voting on a bill of interest
- ▶ Don't forget governor's veto power (bill or line item veto: 10- or 20-day time frame)

# Advocacy 101 – Do's and Don'ts

## Phone Contact

- ▶ Be prepared – brief notes outlining bill number, position and rationale
- ▶ Tell your legislator/office what you would like them to do/vote
- ▶ If you can't speak with the legislator, ask for the staff member who covers education-related issues
- ▶ Provide contact information if appropriate
- ▶ Be courteous and professional

# Advocacy 101 – Do's and Don'ts

## Email or Written Correspondence

- ▶ Brief introduction of yourself, include the bill number, your position and rationale – BRIEF
- ▶ Spelling, grammar, punctuation and tone
- ▶ Contact information – want to be seen as a resource
- ▶ Inquire about the legislator's position
- ▶ Be professional and courteous

# Advocacy 101 – Do's and Don'ts

## Personal Visits

- ▶ Schedule an appointment if possible – staff or member
- ▶ Limit to 30 minutes max – maybe less during session
- ▶ Dress professionally – better to be overdressed
- ▶ Prepare materials, “leave behinds” (one-pager vs. *War and Peace*)
- ▶ Follow up – a thank-you note/card also serves as reminder of visit

# Advocacy 101 – Do's and Don'ts

## Public Testimony

- ▶ Dress professionally
- ▶ Be brief – often strict time limits imposed
- ▶ Speak clearly and don't read your testimony
- ▶ State your position on the bill upfront
- ▶ Thank them for the opportunity
- ▶ Offer to be a resource or answer any questions

# Advocacy 101 – Do's and Don'ts

## General Do's

- ▶ Be professional to all (dress, speaking, written materials)
- ▶ If you don't know the answer, tell them you will get back with them – and follow up
- ▶ Offer to be resource on your issues – school finance, business operations
- ▶ Be brief; “make it fit on a bumper sticker”
- ▶ Stay engaged, build and nurture relationships



# Advocacy 101 – Do's and Don'ts

## General Don'ts

- ▶ Don't be disrespectful
- ▶ Don't answer if you don't know – credibility is your best friend
- ▶ Don't overload staff or members with information – time sensitive
- ▶ Don't wait for the regular session – start today
- ▶ Don't assume they know school business

# Advocacy 101 – Do's and Don'ts

## Examples

- ▶ Egos (no lack of confidence at the Capitol)
- ▶ Head games (don't fall for them)
- ▶ Prepare to be interrupted / challenged /questioned
- ▶ Credibility is key

# Advocacy 101 – Do's and Don'ts

Oh, my.....

- [illegible]

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## Useful Information to Have on Hand

- ▶ Annual budget
- ▶ Student population (enrollment and demographics)
- ▶ Fund balance (designated vs. undesignated)
- ▶ Tax rate, local debt, LHE
- ▶ Administrative costs (what they include)

# Advocacy 101 – Do's and Don'ts

## **Vote, Folks!**

- ▶ 1 governor
- ▶ 1 lieutenant governor
- ▶ 150 House members
- ▶ 31 Senators
- ▶ = impact lives of 5.4 million students, 340k teachers, 1,200+ districts and charter schools, 8,500+ campuses

# Advocacy 101 – Do's and Don'ts

## Contact TASA GR staff

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