

ADVOCACY 101



Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed it's the only thing that ever has."

— Margaret Mead

ADVOCACY IS...

- The art of persuading others.
- The ability to change rules, decisions, laws and ordinances to solve community problems.
- The opportunity to go beyond community service to solve problems at the **public policy** level.



PUBLIC POLICY IS...

The set of laws, plans, actions, and behaviors of a government (city, state, federal, etc).

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO ADVOCATE?

You are advocating every time you express your point of view on an issue, whether it is what to eat for dinner or how much the federal government should invest in safer roads and neighborhoods. To be an effective advocate, you need to educate yourself about an issue or cause, develop a point of view about that cause, and then share that point of view and your reasoning with others, with the intention of bringing about some sort of change or improvement.



WHO CAN BE AN ADVOCATE?

Anyone can be an advocate! You don't need to be a top expert or high ranking member of a large company or organization in order to be heard. You don't even need to be of voting age. Whether you want to offer an idea for a law or voice your opposition to a proposed bill, there are many opportunities for you to participate in the legislative process. It is not difficult at all. All you need is what you already have—your knowledge about the issue, a little evidence, a few visuals, and your concern.

Your voice matters! According to the U.S. Census Bureau, **68 million people in the United States are under the age of 18**. That's **26% of the population** who participate in school and community activities, 26% who spend more than \$150 billion a year, and 26% who care about the world in which they live, so make your voice heard! You are an active citizen, student and consumer, and you can make a difference, whether you take the initiative as a single individual, as a member of a youth or school organization, or as part of an alliance with other students and adults.



ARE YOU ALLOWED TO ADVOCATE AS A GIRL SCOUT?

While Girl Scouts are not allowed to participate directly or indirectly in any political campaigns or partisan efforts on behalf of or in opposition to a candidate in public office, you **ARE** allowed to advocate for issues that matter to you. Writing, visiting, or calling your Members of Congress, Governor, state legislator and all other local policy makers in support or opposition to legislation, especially when Girl Scout or girl issues arise, is allowed. Using courage, confidence, and character by raising your voice to promote legislative change is exactly the kind of thing we support at Girl Scouts.

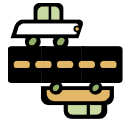


YOUR ADVOCACY CAN SHAPE POLICY



When you express your opinion to your elected officials, you can help shape the policy they create. Generally speaking, elected officials and their staff appropriate money for programs and services through school, city, state and federal budgets. They also decide how funds can be used, what training or supports may be offered and what activities should take place in the social services programs they fund. It is also the job of these policy makers to represent you – the constituents who live in their communities and who voted them into office. After completing the DASHboard Road Safety program, you know firsthand the profound impact that transportation policy (or lack thereof) has on the lives of you, your friends, your family and your community. Because you have this knowledge and these issues affect you personally, you can be a very effective advocate for sustaining and expanding support of safer roads and safer transportation policies in your community.

The future of transportation and road safety lies in the level of commitment that public officials make to fund programs. **Your voice** will impact their level of commitment.



WHO ARE THE POLICY MAKERS?

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

CITY, TOWN:

Mayor
City or town manager
Your council member, commissioner, alderman, supervisor etc.
Youth advisory council

COUNTY:

County Executive
Your county council member, commissioner, supervisor, etc.
Youth advisory commission

SCHOOL DISTRICT:

Your school board member
Student board member(s)
Superintendent

STATE GOVERNMENT

Governor
Lieutenant Governor

Speaker of the House
President of the Senate
House and Senate Minority Leaders
Your state senator(s)
Your state representative(s)
Commissioner or Secretary of the State, Department of Transportation, etc.

NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

President
Vice President (also President of the Senate)
Senate Majority Leader
Speaker of the House of Representatives
House and Senate Minority Leaders
Your two U.S. senators
Your U.S. representative(s)
Secretary of the Department of Transportation, and other agencies
U.S. Surgeon General, Attorney General, FBI Director, etc.



FIND YOUR MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Locating your Senators and Representative is easy!

- ::: Go to www.govtrack.us/congress/findyourreps.xpd
- ::: Enter your state and zip code into the search field
- ::: Then use the interactive map to locate your district and Representative



ADDITIONAL RESOURCE:

The Activism 2000 Project's "Youth! The 26% Solution Toolkit":

www.youthactivism.com/26PercentSolution/Youth26Solution2008-Web.pdf