



Public Policy Guidebook for ASTDN Members

Tools and Guidelines for Providing Advice to Policy Makers

ASTDN Public Policy Workgroup 2009

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About ASTDN

ASTDN is as an active association of public health nursing leaders from across the United States and its Territories.

The mission of ASTDN is to provide a peer and collegial forum for public health nursing leadership, recognizing the authority as well as the responsibility of the governmental role in protecting and promoting the health of the public.

ASTDN is an affiliate of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) and is incorporated as a not-for-profit 501.c. 6 membership organization.

**For more information please visit ASTDN's website at www.ASTDN.org where you will find other resources including:

- A list of current ASTDN members
- ASTDN FACT SHEET: What is Public Health Nursing? What is the Impact of Public Health Nursing?
- ASTDN Recommendations for Taking Action on the Public Health Nursing Shortages through the 2009 Economic Stimulus Package
- ASTDN 2009 Program Priorities and Budget Concerns

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What Is Advocacy?

Why Is It Important for ASTDN Members to Understand Public Policy Development and to Be Effective Advocates?

As constituents and members of the public health community, ASTDN members are often asked to provide educational information and advice to policy makers. In order to create effective public policy, it is very important for front line workers who are knowledgeable about the health, attitudes and behaviors of populations to be involved in the policy formation process.

Advocacy is a strategy to influence policy makers when they make laws and regulations, distribute resources, and make other decisions that affect peoples' lives. **Advocacy** is essentially about three things:

- Creating policies where they are needed when none exist.
- Reforming harmful or ineffective policies.
- Ensuring good policies are implemented and enforced.

The goal of advocacy is **policy change**.

This publication has several goals:

- Describe ASTDN's structure and methods for formulating the organization's positions.
- Describe a variety of effective advocacy strategies, such as visiting policymakers, delivering messages through the media, or strengthening the ability of organizations and individuals to advocate.
- Establish a framework for identifying policy goals, creating a plan of action, and effectively building the case for change.
- Provide a step-by-step guide for reaching organizational consensus on public policy issues, planning advocacy initiatives, and providing advice to legislators and policy makers for successful implementation.

Members should be aware that advocacy rarely unfolds the same way twice; there can be challenging element of unpredictability.

The Importance of Advocacy

Our organization is at the intersection of public health and nursing and is dedicated to excellence in public health nursing leadership. The acquired knowledge of members can provide the basis for strong and effective public health policy and the achievement of health equity. Developing the necessary skills to advocate to public representatives and decision-makers on behalf of the populations we serve is clearly consistent with our standards of practice, professional obligations and ethical responsibility.

ASTDN has a process for adopting official policies for the organization (outlined on page 11). After a policy has gone through this process and been approved by the ASTDN Board, all members should use the official ASTDN policy as guidance when speaking on the issue for the Association. Members may also use the ASTDN position when speaking on the issue within their individual states.

As Public Employees, Are We Allowed to Advocate and/or Lobby?

The parameters under which governmental employees may advocate: Public employees *are* subject to regulations concerning contacts with members of Congress or state legislators. Fortunately, these regulations do not translate to a blanket prohibition on lobbying your legislators. Under certain conditions, governmental employees may conduct activities for the purpose of influencing a member of Congress or state legislature to favor or oppose legislation or appropriations.

The First Amendment protects your right to lobby members of Congress and congressional staff and committees as well as state legislators, regardless of your status as a government employee.

Remember these things when you are doing advocacy as an individual, not on behalf of your state agency:

- Statements you make must not be construed as official positions of your state or agency.
- You must explicitly separate yourself from your federal or state capacity when lobbying members of Congress or state legislators.
- Identify yourself as a concerned citizen/public health nurse presenting your personal views. There is no need to conceal your government employment, so you should feel comfortable identifying your official local, state or federal capacity and to discuss your professional activities.
- Make it clear that you are speaking on behalf of yourself or a non-governmental organization (i.e. ASTDN) and the views expressed are your own.
- Appropriated federal or state funds may not be used, directly or indirectly, to pay for lobbying activities. This means that anything paid for by the government, including your salary, telephone, copier, paper, postage, or the time of your staff may not be used to support your lobbying activities. However, personal funds or funds provided by non-governmental organizations may be used to support lobbying activities.

These limitations should not discourage you from lobbying your legislators. Your participation in the democratic process can be personally satisfying and is absolutely critical to the attainment of our goals for the nation's health.

If you have any questions or need additional information, ASTDN recommends you visit or speak *with the governmental affairs liaison from your agency* before undertaking legislative visits. Investigate your agency or organization's policies and follow the rules as expressed by your state's ethics office. The bottom line is that it is important for all employees, regardless of employer, to become thoroughly familiar with workplace rules and guidelines so that they can successfully fulfill their role as an advocate.

Nancy Amidei (amidei@u.washington.edu), from the Civic Engagement Project, a joint project of the University of Washington School of Social Work and OMB Watch, urges public employees to use **careful communication**.

- You *cannot* abuse your role.
- You *cannot* speak for your agency unless that is your assigned job.
- You *must not* trade on your position as an agency employee when lobbying as a private citizen.
- You *cannot* use public resources to lobby.

But you do not lose your rights as a citizen. You *can* speak up on your own time, using your own resources, in your own personal style, and you *do* have the right to help others be effective advocates for themselves, their families, their communities, and programs that help them.

We must also keep in mind that the rules governing an individual's advocacy efforts can be different from the rules governing organizational advocacy and lobbying activities.

As Members of ASTDN, Are We Allowed to Advocate and/or Lobby?

According to a guidance document posted on the IRS website, "Under the Internal Revenue Code, social welfare organizations, unions and trade associations generally are permitted to engage in advocacy or lobbying related to their exempt purposes. However, they may engage in only limited political campaign activity. The guidance clarifies the tax implications of advocacy that meets the definition of political campaign activity. Organizations that are exempt from federal income tax under § 501(a) as organizations described in § 501(c) (6) may, consistent with their exempt purpose, publicly advocate positions on public policy issues. This advocacy may include lobbying for legislation consistent with these positions."

However, there are tax rules on public advocacy by tax-exempt organizations. Tax exempt organizations, such as those described in sections 501(c) (4), (c) (5), and (c) (6) of the Internal Revenue Code, must adhere to both McCain-Feingold and the Internal Revenue Code.

ASTDN, as well as APHA and many of our partners in public health, have been granted tax-exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service, and as such face certain legal limitations on the types of political and lobbying activities in which they can engage. When you are participating in advocacy activities as a member or leader of ASTDN, it is critical to understand the following tax and lobbying guidelines.

For example, tax-exempt organizations are not allowed to be involved or intervene in a political campaign—either on behalf of or in opposition to a particular candidate or policy-maker. Yet, these organizations can engage in lobbying activities regarding issues, legislation, and regulation subject to certain limitations.

An important question to ask is, "What is considered lobbying?" To be considered lobbying, a communication must refer to and express a view on a specific legislative proposal that has been introduced before a legislative body (federal, state, or local). This means working to influence the outcome of specific legislation—trying to get a bill passed or defeated—by communicating your organization's views or position to those who participate in the formulation of the specific legislation—your Members of Congress, your state legislators, your local elected officials, or the staff of policy-makers.

Recent interpretation and clarification of the IRS laws by Congress means that these lobbying rules also apply to lobbying appointed officers of a regulatory agency. This would affect how ASTDN interacts with top staff of the CDC or HRSA.

Another important question is, "How is lobbying different from advocacy?" Although most people use the two terms interchangeably, it is important to understand the difference between advocacy and lobbying. When nonprofit organizations advocate on their own behalf, they seek to affect some aspect of society, whether they appeal to individuals about their behavior, employers about their rules, or the government about its laws.

Advocacy is participating in the democratic process by taking action in support of a particular issue or cause. Advocacy includes activities such as participating in a town meeting or demonstration, conducting a public forum or press activity, or developing an issue brief for your state or local policy-makers on a particular public health issue. These types of activities do *not* constitute lobbying as long as you are not urging a policymaker to take a position or action on specific legislation.

Lobbying, on the other hand, refers specifically to advocacy efforts that attempt to influence legislation. This critical distinction is important to keep in mind because it means that laws limiting the lobbying done by nonprofit organizations do not govern other advocacy activities.

Larger organizations like APHA and ANA employ staff in their Government Relations section who are registered as lobbyists with the Senate and the House. This requires the organization to report the amounts expended on their lobbying activities. ASTDN does not have paid lobbyists, and relies on ASTDN members to advocate on behalf of our issues.

Another important distinction to keep in mind is that ASTDN is not lobbying when it is asked to present testimony or respond to an inquiry by the House Commerce Committee, or asked to present testimony before the state legislature. It does not constitute lobbying because the organization was asked to testify. If ASTDN requests to testify, then this does constitute reportable lobbying.

As an organization, we also have to be concerned with the question, “How much lobbying is our association allowed to do?” Whenever the association expends resources—staff and funding—on lobbying activity, we must track these expenditures for ASTDN’s tax records and for filing our 990 form with the Internal Revenue Service.

In addition, a not-for-profit organization may not spend more than 25 percent of its permitted lobbying total on *grassroots lobbying*. What is the difference between grassroots lobbying and direct lobbying? Grassroots lobbying is appealing to the general public to contact the legislature about an issue. Direct lobbying is contacting government officials or employees directly to influence legislation. If an issue is to be decided through a ballot initiative or referendum, appeals to the public are considered direct lobbying, because the public in this instance acts as the legislature. This is helpful to nonprofits that elect to come under the 1976 law, as they may only devote 25 percent of their total lobbying expenditures to grassroots lobbying. ASTDN does not do grassroots lobbying.

Remember, states can have specific state laws that govern lobbying local and state policy-makers. Should you have any questions or would like additional information about your rights and the legality or compliance of your individual or organizational lobbying activities, please contact your local ethics official or an attorney for more details.

Keep in mind that this is just an overview of advocacy and lobbying guidelines. For more detailed analysis of the rules governing lobbying and the tax codes, please see the following additional resource: “Lobbying, Advocacy and Nonprofit Boards,” a publication written by John D. Sparks for the National Center for Nonprofit Boards.

Why Should ASTDN Do Advocacy?

There are a lot of good reasons why ASTDN should vigorously participate in the public policy development process.

First and foremost, we can make a difference, both as an individual organization or in concert with other stakeholders. Our creative thinking can help find workable solutions to public health problems. We can get laws changed and help chart the direction of policy. In fact, advocacy, telling our legislators what we want, is at the very heart of democracy. Policy makers need to learn from our expertise and our stories in order to address the root causes and assist populations in need.

Effectively telling our public health nursing stories can also help build our credibility as an organization and increase visibility for public health, public health nursing, and more importantly, for the populations we serve and their issues. By sustaining a vocal and noticeable presence throughout the policy-making process, ASTDN members can ensure that vital public health programs and services are protected and supported - both fiscally and politically.

The bottom line: If we don’t advocate for public health nursing, we can’t expect that anyone else will.

About Constituency

In advocacy, a constituency is a group of people whom an individual or organization represents and from whom that individual or organization draws political support and power. In ASTDN's case, our constituency is not only the public health nursing leadership in the states and territories, but also the people served by public health, public health nursing and the public health community at large.

It is generally accepted that when an individual or organization has constituents, they are responsible and accountable for representing the interests of those people. Therefore, when ASTDN is speaking for others, we must be sure our actions are in the best interests of our constituents. While it is impossible to talk to every person who might be affected by our policy proposals, it is critical to ensure that our policy positions reflect the interests of those we strive to help.

Remembering those IRS Guidelines that say, "Organizations that are exempt from federal income tax under § 501(a) as organizations described in § 501(c) (6) may, consistent with their exempt purpose, publicly advocate positions on public policy issues. This advocacy may include lobbying for legislation consistent with these positions." In other words, our advocacy needs to be limited to those issues which are likely to affect our constituency.

Development of ASTDN Positions

The ASTDN public policy development process is the mechanism by which the Association addresses policy guidance to others outside our organization. The purpose of these guidelines, adopted by our Executive Board, is to set forth the principles and procedures that guide external policy matters.

Ideas for new public policy activity may come from anywhere within the organization. At times, the idea may also come from one of ASTDN's partners. Any member or partner is free to bring an idea forward to the Public Policy Workgroup for consideration. Before any advocacy takes place, there is a policy development process that can result in:

- Issuance of an ASTDN position paper;
- Coalition building on a particular issue;
- Issuance of a letter of concern or support for an issue;
- Participating as a "sign on"; or
- In-person visitation to policy makers or legislators.

Sign-ons are joint letters sent by ASTDN and other agencies or partners to members of Congress, committees and other policy makers. ASTDN partners with other Quad Council members, including APHA, ANA and ACHNE, as well as with ASTHO and other ASTHO affiliates, federal agencies and other organizations to influence policymakers to pass legislation and make regulations in the interest of public health, nursing and public health nursing.

What Constitutes ASTDN Policy?

ASTDN policy is a plan, a course of action, a position paper, or set of statements adopted by our ASTDN Board of Directors for the purpose of influencing and determining decisions or procedures.

Although, it is best when advocacy initiatives are well planned, sometimes opportunities for advocacy arise quickly and there is little time for preparation. For example, a policy maker may ask ASTDN about the feasibility of a program or project and need an answer very soon. ASTDN might be invited to participate in a media event, or come to an important meeting to brief policy makers. These opportunities for advocacy may not lend themselves to extensive policy research and analysis, or to our usual policy adoption process. However, they can be important opportunities for advocacy.

In some cases, the policy information is already available, so a formal analysis is not needed. Other times, some research needs to be done. In most cases, it is best to use both kinds of information sources when developing an advocacy strategy. Policy analyses are often presented in the form of a report, but can also be organized in other ways, such as charts or matrices.

Steps in Policy Analysis

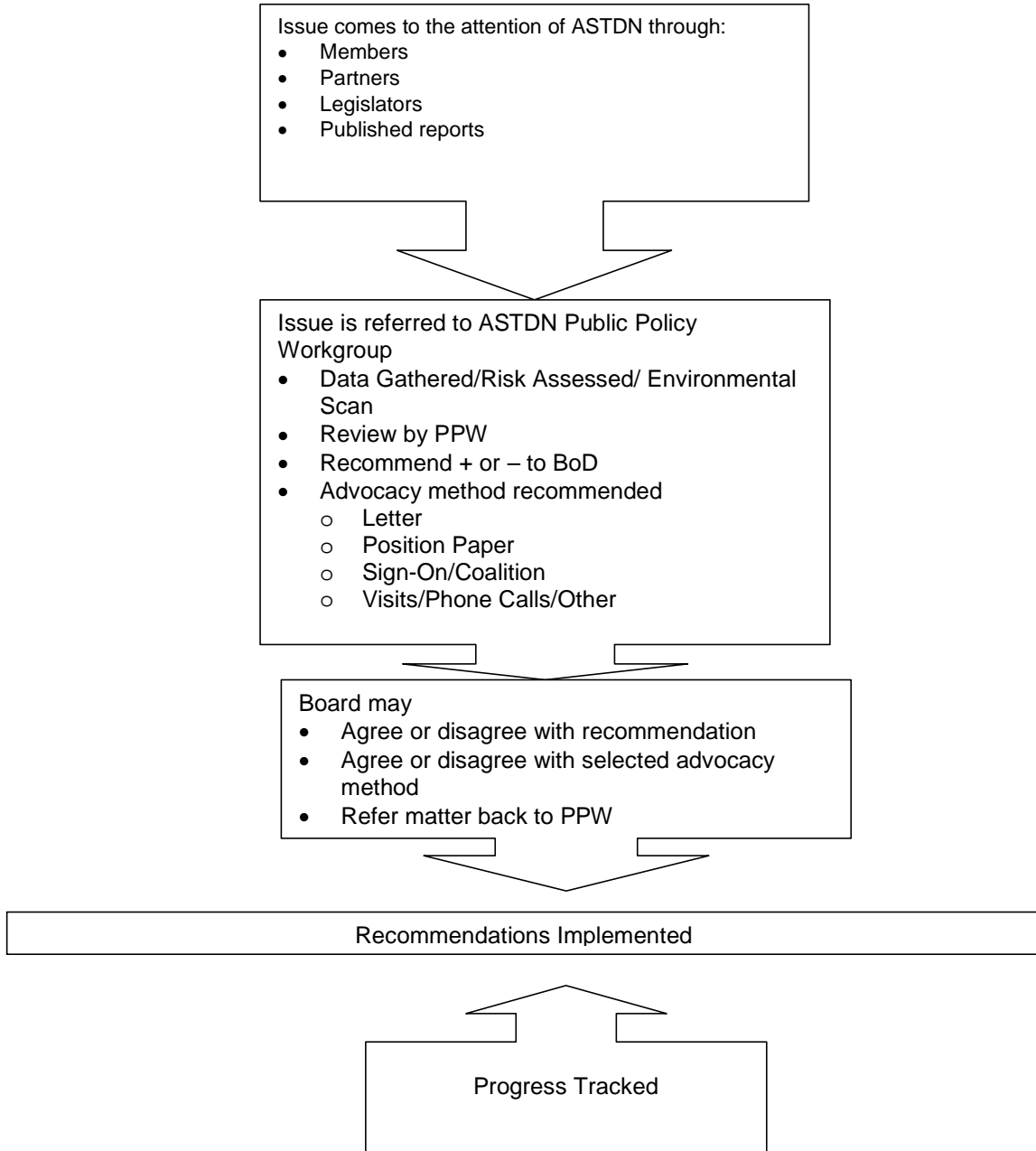
Policy analysis provides a basis for choosing appropriate advocacy strategies. Policy analysis includes:

- Identifying the need for policy change or policy issues.
- Identifying key actors and institutions that make decisions about policies, as well as those who can influence policy makers.
- Analyzing the distribution of political power among key actors.
- Understanding formal and informal policy making processes.
- Understanding the social and political context.

ASTDN will not always have the time or resources to take all policy analysis steps before we begin advocating. The most important point is that the more thoroughly we can analyze policy actors, issues,

and the environment in advance, the more likely we will to succeed in advocacy. Even if we as an organization decide not to engage in advocacy, policy analysis will help us to reflect on the context in which we are working and understand how the policy environment influences the outcome of policy issues. ASTDN's Public Policy Workgroup may be helpful in performing policy analysis, but any member may assist and bring their experience and viewpoint to the process.

Schematic of ASTDN's Public Policy Process



How Can ASTDN Members Be Effective Advocates For Policy Change?

Public Health Nursing leaders have an important role to play in educating public officials about public health issues and concerns.

There are a number of effective methods for getting messages across to legislators and other policy makers.

1. **Learn about the legislative process.** Generally, the earlier ASTDN can get involved, the better. And remember, when it comes to getting legislation passed: timing is everything.
2. **Participate in ASTDN's listserv and legislative action alerts.** ASTDN members are kept apprised of key issues through the listserv and action alerts. This will enable you to better use ASTDN's position papers, publications and letters of concern to accurately portray ASTDN's policies.
3. **Participate in Coalitions.** ASTDN participates in a number of coalitions that represent its organizational values and objectives. ASTDN is a member of the Quad Council of Nursing Organizations, which includes in addition to ASTDN, the American Nurses Association, the Association of Community Health Nursing Educators and the Public Health Nursing Section of the American Public Health Association.

ASTDN also participates in the Americans for Nursing Shortage Relief Coalition in supporting Title VIII legislation and appropriations for nursing education.

APHA coordinates two coalitions in which ASTDN participates. These coalitions advocate for fully funding public health programs and services at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).

[CDC Coalition](#)
[Friends of HRSA](#)

Other key coalitions that ASTDN participates in include:

- The Healthiest Nation Alliance;
 - The Alliance of Nursing Organizations;
 - Americans for Nursing Shortage Relief;
 - Task Force on the Nursing Shortage;
 - ASTHO Affiliates Council; and
 - The Trust for America's Health.
4. **Write Letters.** A well-written letter from a constituent is one of the most influential ways of communicating with a legislator. Contact your Senators and Representatives urging them to sponsor, vote for and act on behalf of public health programs and services. Writing to a public official does make a difference. They know that every person who writes represents many others who feel the same but don't write.

Tips for effective letter writing include:

- Be clear about what you want.
- State your concern for the issue clearly. Be sure to include how public health practitioners, communities, and those you serve would be affected by a proposed change in the law.
- Include the number if a bill is involved.
- Tell a story or example to make the issue real.
- Ask for a direct response with his or her position.
- Send a copy to the legislator's staff and to the chair of the public policy committee.
- Personal letters are considered much better than form letters or petitions.

- E-mail is not necessarily effective. Recent surveys show that some legislators treat e-mail with the same value as a regular paper letter and others treat it with low value, like bulk mail communications. When in doubt, back up your email with a paper letter.

5. Make Phone Calls. Make telephone calls to your elected officials about pending legislation, regulations, or other priority public policy matters to describe how a change in law would affect our programs and constituents. Urge your members by mail or broadcast fax to do likewise.

6. Testify. You as an individual, and ASTDN as a group, have the expertise legislators need before they make decisions about the budget, regulations, or new laws. Find out when the appropriate committees are holding hearings on subjects related to our mission and ask permission to testify in person. Include in your testimony data about the impact of your services along with public health nursing recommendations for action on the public policy issue. See "Tips for Successful Testimony."

7. Make In-Person Visits to Legislators and Other Policy-Makers. Every citizen has the right to seek a meeting with their legislator, councilperson or other elected representative. See "Tips for Successful Legislative Visits."

8. Be an "inside advocate" by providing education as part of your job duties.

Government employees are often in the position of helping the legislative process from their official positions, and just by performing normal job duties, help to shape legislation or policy.

The Legislative Process is set up to answer 3 questions:

- Is bill a good idea? (This gets answered in Policy Committees);
- Is bill a good use for tax dollars? (This gets answered in Appropriations, Ways & Means Committees); and
- Is bill able to win support of 51% of voters? (This is answered on House & Senate floors).

You can help provide information to determine the answers to all three as a part of your job, which is neither, strictly speaking advocacy nor lobbying.

Consider the ways governmental employees provide answers to these questions. You can provide:

- Background or history on an issue;
- Statistics you have collected or interpreted;
- Budget estimates;
- Information on what changes in laws would mean;
- Telling the stories of individuals, groups or communities you have worked with;
- Information useful to forming positions and educating legislators; and
- Public education.

You may also enable others to do these things.

Potentially, you may also:

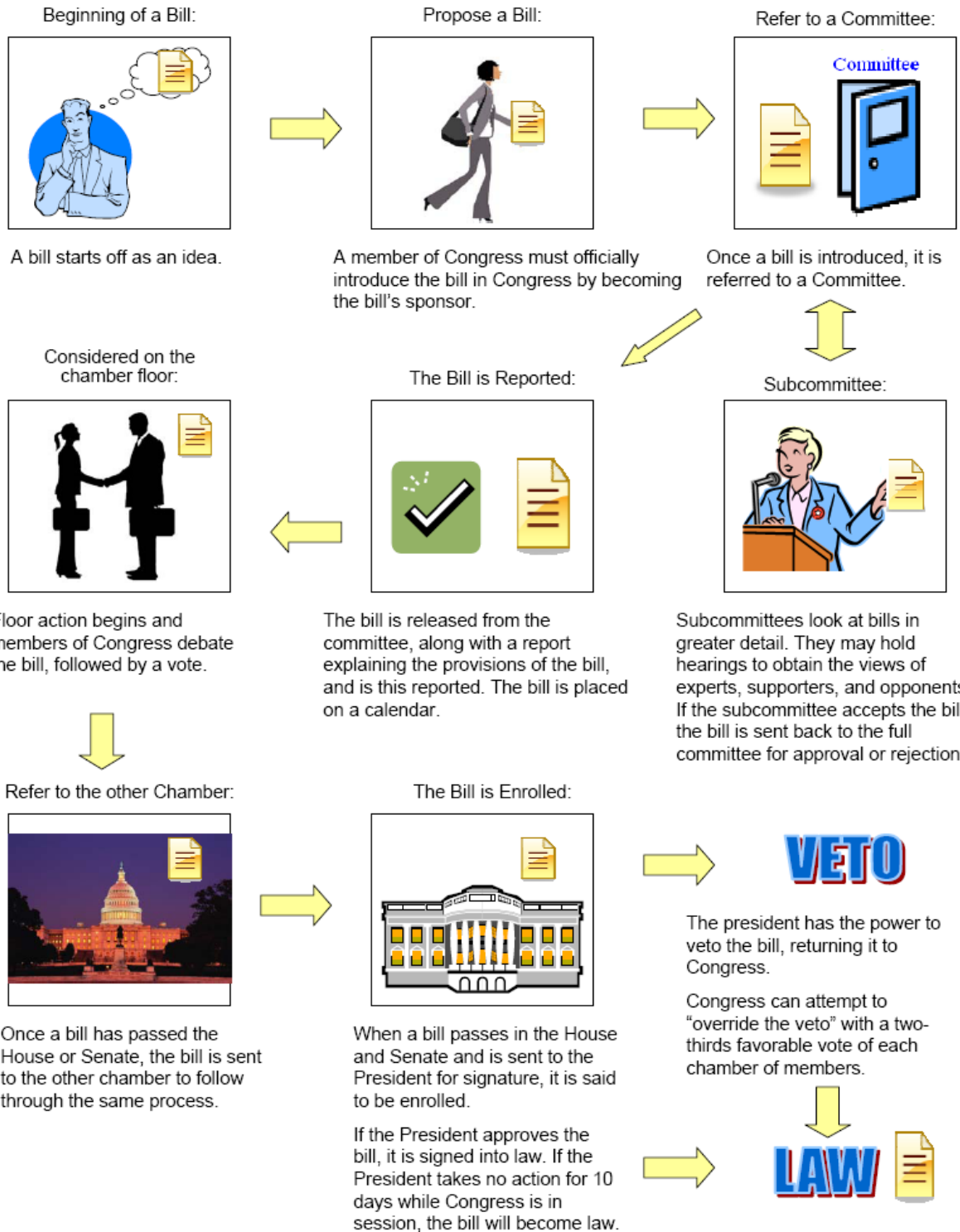
- Explain regulations and how they are developed;
- Join groups or coalitions as "informational members" or "ex officio";
- Influence unions as to their positions or participate in advocacy through unions;
- Exert influence through membership on faith community committees or as part of professional organizations;
- Encourage family members to play active roles;
- Participate in other local, state, or national advocacy groups;

- Serve on non-profit agency boards;
- Invite legislators to your agencies, prepare site visits, or help contractees to set up/conduct site visits with elected officials;
- Help others understand the process as well as specific bills/policies;
- Be accessible to advocates, which also helps you to reflect their views accurately;
- Contribute to newsletters of non-profit groups;
- Help organize retirees, who can talk about things current employees can't;
- Attend advocacy days sponsored by not-for-profits- Just be sure to take the day off if you plan to lobby.
- Help with Fact Sheets, because accurate information is in everyone's interest;
- Speak at classes, congregations, PTAs, other community groups; and Distribute "tools" like voter registration forms and informational literature

Understanding the Legislative Process

The legislative process can sometimes seem complicated and overwhelming. This section discusses legislative procedures at the federal and state levels.

How an Idea Becomes a Federal Law



How Does an Idea Become a State Law?

The legislative process varies from state to state. In Arizona for instance, the legislature adjourns the last week in April, while the Wisconsin legislature is generally in session into December. The Nebraska state legislature is a unicameral body, meaning instead of a house and a senate, there is just one legislative house.

The best way to become quickly familiar with your state's legislative process is to contact your local or state chapter of League of Women Voters or contact the National Conference of State Legislatures in Washington, DC, at 444 North Capitol Street, NW, Suite 515, Washington, DC, 20001, (202) 624-5400, or at www.ncsl.org.

Tips for Presenting Testimony

Testifying before a congressional committee, a city council hearing, or a federal field hearing with jurisdiction over public health programs and funding is a great opportunity to educate and influence policy-makers.

If you want to share your knowledge on a particular public health subject or bill:

- Write a letter in support of the bill to the committee members indicating a willingness to work with the committee on the bill and to testify;
- Contact the staff of the committee with jurisdiction as soon as you learn that hearings are scheduled to take place; and
- Secure an "invitation" to testify through the bill's sponsor or committee members.

When you are preparing to testify:

- Find out the committee's procedural rules including length of statement, format of panels, and number of packets required. Hearing will generally be set up with witnesses testifying in "panels" of several people with similar concerns or positions, thus saving time and allowing witnesses to comment on each other's statements.
- Be sure to find out how far in advance written materials need to be submitted to committee staff.
- Recognize that your written statement will be a part of the official record. A written statement can be longer than your oral statement.
- Remember, the best witnesses are not professional witnesses, they are citizens committed to public health with specific expertise or experience.

Your brief and concise written statement for testimony purposes should include:

- A title page;
- A clear presentation of your position: "I/We support _____."
- Factual arguments and data as evidence to support your position. Consider including scientific studies, research papers, editorials and news articles, and APHA-developed resources; and
- A conclusion that reviews your basic position.

Helpful hints when preparing to present testimony:

- Do the necessary homework to find out about the committee members and their particular interests and record in the subject at hand.
- Be sure to address the legislators' interests and concerns when presenting your testimony.
- Summarize your position in three concise points.
- Use your oral statement as an opportunity to make a brief summation of your written testimony

- Be precise and concise. Your oral statement generally should be kept to five minutes. Stick to the allocated amount of time.
- Speak clearly, loudly, and make eye contact when presenting your remarks.
- Concentrate your remarks on what can be done and keep your remarks as positive as possible. Instead of reinforcing negatives, concentrate on what will enhance or improve the program.
- Avoid scientific or professional jargon. Excessive detail will lose the audience. Follow this suggestion: "Tell the committee what time it is — not how the watch works."
- Use your best professional judgment in suggesting what action committee members should take. Policy-makers are looking to learn from your experience and recommendations.
- Be polite. Address the policy-makers as "Chairman _____" or "Madame Chair _____," "Senator" or "Representative _____," "Mayor _____," or "Mr. _____ or "Ms. _____."

Presenting ASTDN Positions in Testimony

Members of ASTDN have two roles related to providing testimony: one as an official representative of their state health department and another as a representative for ASTDN. When speaking in their official state role, guidance and restrictions on testimony will be provided by their state agency, so it may not be possible to include all components advocated for in ASTDN policy statements. When speaking on behalf of ASTDN, members should include all components of the appropriate position statement approved by the ASTDN Board.

Communicating with your Legislator

By Telephone - Use telephone calls selectively and only for the most urgent issues. When calling:

- Plan exactly what you want to say before you call. Prepare an outline to cover the major points.
- Ask to speak to the staff person who handles the issue you wish to discuss.
- If no one is available to talk, leave a message with your main point as part of the message.
- Begin and end by stating your name and identifying yourself as a registered nurse and a public health nurse. Also identify yourself as a constituent.
- Deliver a brief and simple message; for example, "Please vote in favor of HB 5505." Say why in a few sentences.
- Be courteous even if you disagree with a position.
- Leave a phone number where you can be reached; offer to provide more information if requested.
- Follow up with a letter.

Write – Keep these things in mind when writing to a legislator:

- State the purpose of your letter in the first paragraph.
- Describe your practice and the patient population you serve.
- Address only one issue per letter.
- Refer to the specific legislation by number and title.
- Keep your letter to one or two pages in length.
- State whether you are a constituent, or identify any connection with the legislator's district.
- Make your point clearly, but do so in a courteous and respectful manner.
- Support your position with research or other reliable information and with your own experiences. Local examples of how the legislation will impact health care or nursing in the legislator's district have the greatest impact.
- Be constructive. If the legislation deals with a problem you admit exists but you think the bill is the wrong approach, explain what you believe to be the right approach.

- Personalize your letter. Legislators pay more attention to these than to ones mass produced. Form letters and response cards should be used only if you have no other alternative for expressing your opinions.

Visit – It is often very effective to visit legislative offices. Here are some tips on making legislative visits:

- Prepare Do research beforehand. Know who your legislator is, which party they belong to, and in which community they live.
- Know the issue. Although you do not need to be an expert on every aspect of a bill, you need to know basic information about the issue that is being addressed. ASTDN issues papers and action alerts that provide this information. In addition, draw from your own nursing experiences. Try to anticipate the arguments against your position, and be prepared to address them.
- Deliver the message. Provide reliable information. Nothing destroys credibility faster than inaccurate information.
- Be concise, stick to basics, and stay focused.
- Most legislators do not have a health care background. Make no assumptions about their level of knowledge of health care systems, financing, or delivery. Use the same principles you use when educating your patients. You may not be able to answer all of the legislator's questions, but offer to find the answers whenever possible.
- Frame your message in terms of local effect. Hearing how an issue affects the community's health facilities, local public health agency, and nurses and other constituents of the legislator's district will have a greater impact on the legislator than hearing how it affects the state generally. As former Speaker of the House of Representatives Tip O'Neil once stated, "All politics is local."
- Maintain a professional appearance and attitude. Dress in business attire or "dress casual." Always maintain a courteous attitude. Although it is appropriate to disagree with the positions held by a legislator, it is not appropriate to let that disagreement be evidenced by anger, rudeness, or disrespect.
- When you leave the meeting, be sure the legislator knows your position and the expectations you have of him or her.
- Follow up. Send a follow-up letter to show your appreciation for the time the legislator spent with you. In addition to expressing your appreciation, take the opportunity to highlight the key points of your message and the action you are requesting the legislator to take.
- Finally, send any additional information that you said you would provide.

Attend a political fundraiser - So, you've been asked to attend a political fund-raiser and you have no clue what to expect. Here's how to get ready.

- Prep Time. Do your homework.
Review the profile of the legislator who is the focus of the fundraiser.
Read up on the ASTDN or partners' position on current legislation.
 - Check out the ASTDN website (www.astdn.org) for current policy statements, legislative news and issues.
- What to wear and take with you:
 - Unless otherwise specified, dress is usually business attire. Feel free to wear appropriate buttons, such as RN Voter, Nurses for Health Care Reform.
 - Take a supply of business cards and something with which to take brief notes.
- Name Tag Etiquette.
 - After you've registered at the door, you'll most likely be given a name tag to fill out.
 - Print clearly!
 - The tag is worn on your right shoulder and should include your name, the credentials "RN," and "Public Health Nurse" or "ASTDN"

- Working the Room.
 - Your primary objective is to meet and greet the legislator for whom the event is being held.
 - Don't forget to meet their staff as well.
 - Introduce yourself ("Hello, my name is _____, RN. I'm a member of the Association of State and Territorial Director of Nursing, from my state.). People are always glad to meet nurses, and politicians are no different.
 - General conversations are always appropriate, but also use the event as an opportunity to educate people about the association, the profession and our legislative agenda.
 - Hmmmm. If you don't have the answer to a question, jot it down and offer to provide follow-up.

[Retrieved and adapted from <http://www.minurses.org/gov/Guide2003/communicate.shtml>]

ASTDN Tip Sheet:

Tips for Effective Legislative Visits

--May be copied and distributed as a refresher to those making Hill Visits.--

1. Establish your agenda and goals before the visit.

- Know what subject you are going to address.
- Decide the desired outcome of the visit.
 - Is the purpose to get a commitment to vote for the issue? ...that they will take leadership on the issue? ...or simply to share information on the issue?
- Discuss in advance how you will handle the visit.
 - Decide who will start the discussion and put the agenda on the table.
 - Assign a role for all attendees, even if it's nodding in agreement or interjecting some good examples.

2. On the visit:

- Be on time.
- Dress in normal business attire.
- Allow time for small talk at the outset, but not too much. Remember, it's your visit.
- Keep the group small, no more than four or five people.
- Bring a diverse group.
- Wear name tags with your name and the name of our group. Wear them on your right.
- Always start off a meeting by thanking the Member for their support or ask the staff to thank their boss for you. Letting an office know that you recognize the important role they play is always appreciated and polite too.
- Start with a concise introduction to your organization, containing the following information:
 - Who we are;
 - What ASTDN does;
 - What we need from the legislator.
- Be precise and concise.
 - Don't overload with issues or messages.
 - Stick to no more than two or three.
- If possible, explain your position in terms that relate to the Member's district or state.
 - Provide information on the status of the targeted public health nursing issues in their state. This helps them identify with the problem and understand why they need to be of assistance.
- Be polite. Address representatives as "Chairman" or "Madame Chair," "Senator" or "Representative" or "Mr.," "Ms.," or "Mrs."
- Meetings should be seen as a two-way street, with information flowing both ways. Take the opportunity to find out where the Member stands on the issues you are presenting if not already know to you.
- Stay on course. Resist any side conversations or tangential issues. Making social conversation is important, but time is limited – don't waste your time discussing the weather.
- Be direct, but never threatening.
- If at all possible, try to arrange the visit on your turf. Invite the person to make a home visit, or to tour a clinic or whatever facility or site conveys your message in real and human terms.

3. Listen well.

- Careful listening can give clues to the elected official's views.
- Listen for opportunities to provide good information.
- If you are meeting with a "silent type," draw her/him out by asking questions.
- If you are confronted with a "long-winded type," look for openings to bring her/him back to the point.

4. Be prepared and informed.

- Know your facts. The more you know about the advocacy issue you select, the community where you work, and how political institutions function, the more effective an advocate you can be.
- Bring a data sheet, fact sheet or talking points that can be left with the official or their staff. If you are giving testimony, your written material will become part of the record, so be sure everything is clear, accurate and well-formatted. Not a bad idea, even if it isn't testimony.
- Remember, most elected officials are generalists, not experts in public health or nursing.
- Avoid being overly scientific and using professional jargon. You will lose your audience.
- Do your homework, but don't feel that you need to know every little detail of an issue. Know when to admit, "I don't know," and offer to follow up with the information.
- Talk about personal experiences, where appropriate.
- Relate the concerns of your colleagues, friends and members of the community, where appropriate.
- Be open to counter-arguments, but don't get stuck on them.
- *Above all, don't be argumentative or confrontational.*

5. Don't stay too long.

- Try to get closure on your issue.
- If you hear what you had hoped for, express your thanks and leave.
- If you reach an impasse, thank her/him, even if disappointed, and say so.
- Leave room to continue the discussion at another time.

6. Remember you are there to build a relationship. (See ASTDN Tip Sheet: Building and Sustaining Relationships with Legislators, Policy Makers and Partners.)

- If the elected official is knowledgeable on an issue you've been involved in or has supported your position in the past, be sure to acknowledge your appreciation during the course of the visit.
- If the opposite is true, think of the phrase, "No permanent friends, no permanent enemies." Some day, on some issue of importance to you, s/he may come through. In the meantime, your visit may prevent the official from being an active opponent. In other words, you may help to turn down the heat on the other side.
- It can also be very effective to establish a relationship with legislative staffers. Staff is generally more accessible than the official and can usually help to get your message through.
- Remember that trust is the basis of every relationship. Do not give legislators or their staff any reason not to trust you to be anything but honest and forthright throughout the length of your relationship with them. Also, be very careful about choosing groups with which you will align. You must be very sure of their credibility so that it will not reflect badly on ASTDN, yourself or your cause.
- Do not attack the legislator for his/her record on your issue(s), and do not disparage government or politics.

7. Follow-up after the visit.

- Send a thank-you note after the visit.
- If commitments were made in the meeting, repeat your understanding of them.
- If staff members were present, write to them too. They can often be important allies.

ASTDN Tip Sheet

Tips for Building and Sustaining Relationships with Legislators, Policy-Makers and Partners

1. Start at the beginning. Begin building relationships with policymakers.

- Begin by meeting with one of your elected officials or a key agency staff person. Meet face to face.
- Inform them of the policies ASTDN support.
- Ask how ASTDN may work cooperatively with them to achieve our public policy goals.
- Ask one of our board members to attend the meeting with you.
- If you find out that the official or representative you are meeting with is not in agreement, be polite, agree to disagree, but maintain mutual respect, honesty and open lines of communication.

2. Become a source of reliable information.

- Create a packet of information about ASTDN including its mission and services and our public policy agenda along with a letter to each of the key elected officials and government agency staff whose decisions affect your cause.
- Send the packets with a note that you will follow up to schedule an informational meeting to discuss their position with regard to your public policy priorities. Your packet will serve as a helpful informational tool for many audiences.
- Remember: Building credibility is vital to the long-term strength of our public policy efforts.
- If you are not sure of your facts about the issue, don't fudge; admit to what you don't know and get back as soon as possible with the correct information.

3. Get to know the staff.

- Often, the staff of a legislator may be the most knowledgeable person in the legislator's office about your issues.
- Find out which staff person works on your issue and get to know them. In many cases, state or local legislators will have one staff person or none. Members of Congress usually have many staff.
- Send staff your information packet.
- Meet with them as appropriate.
- On occasion, invite them to speak to your members.

4. Demonstrate our members' effectiveness and values.

- Provide a one-hour tour of your programs for one of your elected officials.
- Be sure to have a board member on site to show their support.

5. Give credit when credit is due.

- Write a letter of congratulations to one or more of your elected officials when they act in a helpful way to our cause.
- Remember to thank all those who volunteered time to help your public policy efforts.

6. Provide leadership opportunities.

- You may host a speaking opportunity for an elected official to articulate his or her support for your cause and position on important legislation.

Strategies for Effectively Targeting Legislators

In-person visits to legislators are about persuading them to act on ASTDN's policy recommendations. It may be helpful to think of legislators in terms of where they are likely to stand on the issue prior to visiting them in order that appropriate strategies are used.

Champions are legislators who will be tireless, committed advocates for the cause. They will make the case to their colleagues, help develop a strong "inside" strategy, and be visible public spokespeople. What they need is good information, and visible support for the issue outside the Capitol. To successfully alter any policy, there must be champions for the issue.

Allies are legislators who will be on your side but can be pushed to do more. For example, they might be persuaded to speak up in party caucuses or on the floor for our issue.

Fence Sitters are legislators who will be uncommitted on the issues, potentially able to vote either way. These need to be our key targets in order to create the policy changes for which we are asking. Effective advocacy strategies will include putting together the right mix on "inside" persuasion and "outside" pressure to bring the fence sitters to take action toward our requested change.

Mild or Mellow Opponents are legislators who will be clear votes against, but not inclined to be active on the issue. A key strategy with this group what's key is to keep them from becoming more actively in opposition by giving them enough information to give them pause but not enough to make them angry.

Hard Core Opponents are legislators who are leading the opposition. Strategies for working with this group include isolating them by highlighting the extremes of their positions, rhetoric and alliances, and to give other lawmakers pause about joining with them. ASTDN will seldom or never take this aggressive a stance.

"Inside" vs. "Outside" Advocacy

Effective- policy change can require both an "inside" and "outside" strategy. "Inside" strategies may include:

- Meeting with lawmakers and legislative staff;
- Providing analysis and information to committees and legislative offices;
- Testifying in committee; and/or
- Negotiating with policy makers and other lobby groups

For the most part this is carried out by or in coordination with advocates who work on a regular basis at the Capitol.

An effective campaign also requires "outside" activity, aimed at changing public perception or creating pressure around an issue. Some of these activities may include:

- Media involvement (news conferences, editorial board visits, or assisting reporters with stories);
- Organizing legislative visits by constituents to their legislators;
- Building broad and diverse coalitions around the particular issue;
- Letter writing campaigns

"Outside" and "inside" activities should always be coordinated to ensure that they make strategic sense. Points of coordination may include timing, targeting, and specificity and continuity in messages.

Coalition-Building and Working with Coalitions

Undertaking an advocacy initiative is almost always a team effort. Coalitions can help us expand the scope and effectiveness of our ASTDN public policy work. A coalition is a group of interdependent people focused on advancing or opposing a particular issue. A coalition's power to affect public policy lies in its ability to present a united front representing many, many members.

Coalition-building involves selecting strategic relationships. ASTDN has spent significant time and energy through the course of our history building relationships with other nursing and public health organizations, government officials and other policy makers who share our policy agenda. In order to form a coalition, the members must be informed and engaged on the issue(s), so it's important to have strong internal consensus between partners before devising policy and developing strategies for advocacy.

The advantages of joining or forming coalitions include:

- Creating a greater base of support for our public policy goals. By recruiting new allies, a campaign can generate financial support, volunteers, and other resources to help achieve goals;
- Access to a larger audience. We can provide useful information to greater numbers of people/organizations than can be reached through only our own contacts; and
- Greater leverage with decision-makers. By demonstrating the buy-in for an initiative by multiple organizations, policymakers and others are more likely to join, support, and protect ASTDN's vision and goals.

There are also drawbacks to coalitions and coalitions may not always be the best strategy for advocacy. Sometimes, advocacy is more effective when done privately, without a large group in attendance. Other times, the groups involved may not be in a position to make the compromises that are required to advocate as part of a group. Because coalitions have a consensus building function, they also take time. If ASTDN is advocating for an issue that requires immediate action, we may not have the time to join, build, or agree on a common agenda within a coalition. Some of our existing coalitions may be helpful in this regard.

A coalition is effective only when its issue has merit and the coalition members are organized, informed, truly in agreement as to goals, and dedicated to communicating the importance of the effort. Coalition building calls for establishing and developing contacts that work well together. Through coalitions, ASTDN can raise greater awareness of our causes and our issues, build on relationships with government entities, and help shape laws and policies that affect our mission.

It is critical that ASTDN always maintain credibility in its advocacy. Credibility means that other people trust and value what you have to say. To that end, strategic alliances must be carefully chosen. Effective coalitions may be built with organizations with varied agendas, coming together over a specific issue where there is common ground, but these agreements must be very carefully brokered with complete agreement on terms among all parties.

Key considerations in determining strategic alliances include:

- How many potential members can we identify?
- How controversial is the issue we have chosen?
- How focused do we need to be?
- What is the level of interest, energy and expertise needed?
- With whom can we work well?
- With whom do we agree on basic agenda?
- Who has the time and resources needed to help?
- Who needs to be at the table to be credible?
- What is the effect of excluding certain groups?

- What level of trust does ASTDN have in the potential member? (Strong relationships are needed to sustain complex discussions and sometimes difficult group decisions.)
- Does the potential coalition member have credibility? Would an alliance with the group threaten ASTDN's credibility?
- How do we share the credit?
- Can we immediately agree on goals?
- Is this a group with which we are likely to easily reach consensus?
- Can this group stay focused on the subject at hand?
- Can we agree on structure and responsibility?
- Can we agree who will take the lead and who will speak for the coalition?
- Is this a group that can make compromises?
- Is a group already in existence that can address the issue?
- Is there a clear role for us in the coalition?
- Do we have a forum for recruiting members?
- Do we have the time to participate in or manage a coalition?

Of course, ASTDN will never choose allies that are unprincipled, dishonest, or that use unfair tactics.

Assessing Risk

The more we understand the political environment, the more easily we can assess risk, and the less likely we are to make a mistake that will cause harm to ASTDN, its partners, those we serve, or anyone else.

ASTDN endeavors to adhere to a *Do No Harm* framework for advocacy. In order to do this, we must constantly think about the external environment and the overall impact of projects, and to take practical steps to minimize unintended harms. We must analyze issues that have the potential of creating a division within the public health and nurse communities ("dividers"), and those issues that have helped to build community among us ("connectors").

Advocacy is more likely to be successful, and less likely to expose ASTDN and others to risk, if we first endeavor to answer these questions: (These guidelines are adapted from CARE).

- What are the key political debates, and who represents each side?
- Which issues (or people) have sparked political conflict in the past?
- Which issues (or people) have succeeded in reaching across professional, ethnic, social, or political boundaries?
- How is power being exercised within the political system around this issue?
- Which groups in politics or government are respected and which are disrespected or feared?
- How do the policies you are concerned with relate to controversial topics?
- What are accepted forms of political dialogue and proper protocol for approaching policy makers?

Managing Political Risks

It is important thing to keep in mind that advocacy does not need to be confrontational. There are several ways to minimize the risks associated with advocacy.

- **Make informed judgments.** When selecting an advocacy issue, informed judgments must be made about what kind of risks are acceptable. Advocacy strategy should be based on an analysis of the specific issue. ASTDN should only be involved if they have a legitimate role in the policy debate.
- **Plan the initiative carefully.** Good planning and analysis are the foundations of risk management in advocacy. The better understood the issue, the political context, and the target audience, the less room for error. During the policy analysis stage, there is an opportunity to

learn about the actors and policy-making processes. This is also an opportunity to learn about any risks involved in advocacy. Both external and internal sources can be valuable.

- **Achieve internal consensus among members and partners before taking any advocacy action.** Advocacy is rarely conducted by an individual on behalf of an entire organization. The group process can increase chances of succeeding, but also reveal the risks of any unintended consequences.
- **Know your audience.** The more you know about the background, attitudes, and interests of your target audience, the less likely you are to offend, put someone at risk, or pursue an advocacy strategy that will backfire. Treat those on the other side of the issue with respect.
- **Maintain strong communication** within your own advocacy team and **be vigilant for the development of new political trends.** Things may have changed since the initial analysis.

ASTDN Checklist

Planning an Advocacy Initiative

- Identify the policy issue** - Acquire in-depth information about the problem and the underlying causes. The more we know about problems, the easier to design potential solutions.
 - a. What is the problem? What does the data say? What does the data mean?
 - b. Who does it affect and how?
 - c. What lead to the problem? What are direct causes/indirect causes?

- Identify key actors and institutions** -
 - a. Who makes critical decisions about this issue?
 - b. Who an influence the decision makers?
 - c. What are the interests of the current policy makers?

- Analyze the policy environment** - Is the policy environment ready for change?
 - a. What factors support change?
 - b. What factors work against it?
 - c. Who has taken a public stand? What has been said?
 - d. This a subject for whom there are multiple advocates? In which direction?
 - e. How have issues like this been handled lately?
 - f. Who is open to dialogue?
 - g. Who ultimately controls the decisions?

- Summarize policy findings** - Identify what would achieve the desired change.

- Identify options for policy change** –
 - a. What changes would have to take place in order to achieve the policy goal?
 - b. Which of the policy solutions is likely to have the largest, most lasting impact?
 - c. What will happen if nothing is done regarding these policy issues?
 - d. Which policy solutions are readily achievable and which are likely to be expensive and/or time consuming?
 - e. Which policy solutions are likely to garner significant support or, alternatively, face significant opposition?

- Decide if you want to address this policy issue** - This is a “cost” vs. benefit discussion.
 - a. Is it possible that advocacy will cause ASTDN or our partners to face major risks, such as loss of credibility or alienation of partners?
 - b. Is the timing right for ASTDN?
 - c. Would one of our partners be in a better position to raise the issue?

- If you decide to go forward, select target audiences** –
 - a. Who needs to be involved in the solution?
 - b. Can this be changed administratively or only by statute?
 - c. Who works with this policy issue? Who makes direct decisions about this issue?
 - d. Who does it affect?
 - e. Who can influence the decisions of policy makers?
 - f. Are policy makers and those who can influence them interested in the issues?
 - g. What resources do they have?
 - h. What position and opinions do they have in relation to the policy issues you are considering?
 - i. Can ASTDN participate in policy decisions about the identified issues?
 - j. What sorts of channels exist for ASTDN to participate?
 - k. Where are key decisions on these policies made and who controls such decisions?
 - l. Are the identified policy issues widely discussed?

- m. What changes may occur in the political arena? Are elections coming up? How could they affect the issues identified?
 - n. Are there particular policy maker actions that led to the problem? Why have policy makers taken these positions?
- Set a policy goal –**
- a. What policy changes would yield the desired results? Or what would have a positive impact on the problem?
 - b. What are your best options for policy change?
 - c. What will happen if nothing is done regarding these policy issues?
 - d. Which policy solutions are likely to attract significant support or, alternatively, face significant opposition?
- Identify allies and opponents –** This is a very important exercise.
- a. Who should take the lead on bringing the policy solution to the attention of policy makers?
 - b. Who will support? Oppose?
 - c. Is there a place for coalitions with this issue?
- Select roles -**
- a. What roles are there for ASTDN members and partners?
 - b. How will we work with others?
 - c. Will ASTDN take a lead role or a secondary role?
 - d. How will we work together?
- Identify key messages -**
- a. What specific message/messages will we give our target audience? What is our clear, simple, compelling message?
 - b. How will we get this message across?
 - c. What is the sense of urgency about the issue for scheduling advocacy actions?
 - d. How can we clearly state what action we would like taken on this issue?
 - e. How will we reinforce this message? (Planned repetition.)
- Define advocacy activities -** What tactics will we employ to get our message across? (See Types of Advocacy.)
- Set a timeline –**
- a. What is the sense of urgency?
 - b. What is optimal timing?
 - c. How does this conform to the legislative cycle?
- Prepare a budget figure –** What will it cost to fix this?
- Plan for monitoring and evaluation**

Formatting Advocacy Messages

Know your audience. Find out:

- What are their political interests?
- What group of people do they represent?
- What are their self-interests in relation to the issue?
- How much information do they already have about your issue?
- Are you telling them something they already know?
- What NEW information are you offering?
- Do they already have an opinion? What is it, how strongly held?
- Have they already voted or taken a public position on your issue?
- What objections might they have to your position?
- Do you need to clear up any misperceptions, or counter opposing arguments?
- What could they lose as a result of your proposal?
- What are their personal interests?
- What are their hobbies or “passions” outside of work?
- What do they do in their spare time?
- Do their backgrounds (personal, educational or professional) suggest a bias or position?
- Can you link your issue to something you know they do support?

Network for information. When gathering the information you need about your target audience, two effective approaches are internal and external networking.

Internal networking is the process of using resources within your own organization to get the information you need. The most immediately available source of information you have is your own colleagues.

External networking is the process of asking people outside your organization for information about your target audience. When your goal is to get information from outside ASTDN, it may be best to start with those closest to you.

- Do you or your colleagues have personal contacts within other partner organizations that have information about your target audience?
- Are there people you could approach who might have some information?
- If your own contacts have limited information, do they have ideas about who you could call to learn more?
- If your target audience is a legislator with a local office, watch for announcements of public meetings that may be held in your area. Attending these kinds of meetings also may help you to identify other groups who are involved in your issue.

Be clear. A message is only effective if the targets of your advocacy can understand exactly what you want them to do. Once we have chosen our message, double check that it is not jargon or too technical.

Document the problem. ASTDN and its partners can offer valuable information about the health of communities and the effect of public health efforts. Document and share this information in ways that are useful to policy makers. To maintain credibility, the information must be accurate and reliable.

Deliver messages strategically. Credibility means that other people trust and value what you have to say and credibility is a prerequisite for advocacy. Keep credibility in mind in deciding who will deliver the message and how it will be delivered. Credible messages come from people who know the facts, and have the life experience to interpret these facts for the audience. Choose the best messenger. It should be someone who is credible in the eyes of the target audience.

Good messengers:

- Are knowledgeable about the subject matter and the target audience;
- Are known and trusted by target audiences or will appeal to target audiences;
- Can demonstrate knowledge/expertise that is relevant to the issue;
- Have insight into the issue;
- Have a clear link between with the constituency or the group affected by issue;
- Are not perceived to have unfair political bias;
- Refrain from comments unrelated to the issue.

Reinforce messages. Advocacy messages need to be reinforced over time.

- **Respond to concerns immediately.** Even if your message is appealing, the policy maker may have problems fulfilling your request, such as finding funding, or devising a specific proposal that is supported by enough people. Try to identify your target audience's concerns as soon as possible. Either address these concerns right away (for example, if you are in a meeting) or focus your next communication on ways to resolve those concerns.
- **Re-send the message.** While it is important not to overwhelm target audiences with too much information, persistence can pay off. You can either send the message again yourself or, better yet, rely on other influential people to do it for you. It is best to monitor the impact of your original message before you re-send your message, if possible, to allow for any changes or improvements that might be necessary.
- **Follow up.** When you re-send a message, you want to avoid repeating yourself exactly. There are a number of effective techniques you can use to help reinforce your message and follow up your first communication. You can briefly restate your position in a thank-you letter. If you are asked about specific data, provide them. Arrange for an ally to contact the target audience with similar message to yours.

Appendix: Helpful Websites/Federal Government

Please visit www.house.gov and www.senate.gov for more information regarding **your state's Members of Congress.**

Please visit <http://www.irs.gov/charities/index.html> for more information regarding IRS Guidance.

Executive Branch

The White House	www.whitehouse.gov/
FirstGov (links to all federal govt. info).....	www.firstgov.gov/
Administration for Children and Families.....	www.acf.dhhs.gov/
Administration on Aging	www.aoa.dhhs.gov/
Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality	www.ahrq.gov/
Agriculture Department.....	www.usda.gov/
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	www.cdc.gov/
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (formerly HCFA)	www.hcfa.gov/
Environmental Protection Agency.....	www.epa.gov/
Federal Judicial Center.....	www.fjc.gov/
Federal Interagency Council on Statistical Policy.....	www.fedstats.gov/
Federal Register.....	www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/aces/aces140.html
Food and Drug Administration.....	www.fda.gov/
Food Safety and Inspection Service (USDA).....	www.fsis.usda.gov
Government Printing Office	www.access.gpo.gov/
Health Resources and Services Administration.....	www.hrsa.gov/
Health and Human Services Department.....	www.hhs.gov/
Healthfinder.....	www.healthfinder.gov
Indian Health Service.....	www.ihs.gov/
Library of Congress.....	www.locweb.loc.gov/
National Cancer Institute.....	www.cancernet.nci.nih.gov/
National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases.....	www.niddk.nih.gov/
National Institutes of Health.....	www.nih.gov/
National Institute of Environmental Health Science	www.niehs.nih.gov/
National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism	www.niaaa.nih.gov/
National Institute on Drug Abuse.....	www.nida.nih.gov/
National Library of Medicine.....	www.nlm.nih.gov/
Occupational Safety and Health Administration	www.osha.gov/
Office of Groundwater and Drinking Water	www.epa.gov/OW/OGWDW/index.html/

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.....www.house.gov/

House Committees

Appropriations.....	www.house.gov/appropriations/
Budget	www.house.gov/budget/
Education and the Workforce	http://edworkforce.house.gov/
Energy and Commerce	http://energycommerce.house.gov/
Government Reform and Oversight.....	www.house.gov/reform/
Joint Economic Council.....	www.house.gov/jec/
Judiciary.....	www.house.gov/judiciary/
National Security	www.house.gov/hasc/
Resources	www.house.gov/resources/
House Rules Committee	www.house.gov/rules
Science	www.house.gov/science/
Small Business.....	www.house.gov/smbiz
Transportation and Infrastructure	www.house.gov/transportation
Ways and Means	www.house.gov/ways_means/

U.S. SENATE.....www.senate.gov

Senate Committees

Agingwww.senate.gov/~aging/
Appropriations<http://appropriations.senate.gov/>
Budgetwww.senate.gov/~budget/
Energywww.senate.gov/~energy/
Environment and Public Workswww.senate.gov/~rpc/
Financewww.senate.gov/~finance/
Governmental Affairswww.senate.gov/~gov_affairs
Judiciary.....<http://judiciary.senate.gov>
Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.....www.senate.gov/~labor/
Small Businesswww.senate.gov/~sbc/

NEWS AND PUBLIC POLICY INFORMATION

CNNwww.cnn.com
Congress.org
www.congress.org/
C-SPAN.....www.c-span.org/
Decisions of the Supreme Courtwww.law.cornell.edu/
Ecola Directories.....www.ecola.com/
The Legislative Branch.....www.lcweb.loc.gov/global/legislative/congress.html
National Public Radio.....www.npr.org/
New York Times.....www.nytimes.com/
Thomas: Legislative Information on the Net.....www.thomas.loc.gov/
Top Political Stories of the Day<http://yahoo.com/headlines/politics/>
USA Today.....www.usatoday.com/
Washington Postwww.washingtonpost.com/
White House News Roomwww.whitehouse.gov/news/

Appendix: How the Federal Budget Process Works

The Federal Budget matters to those of us who work in public health because:

- Budget and tax decisions drive funding levels for each individual program.
- Budget and tax decisions significantly impact our ability to meet the needs of the populations we serve, including children, families, the elderly, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable members of our society.
- Federal budget decisions directly affect the states and territories that employ us. Conservatively, Federal funds account for about a fourth of states' budgets.
- When Federal funds are cut, funds are shifted onto state and local budgets.
- Federal tax policies affect state revenues.

What's in the Federal Budget?

- About 8-9% of the budget is interest on the National Debt.
- About 42% of the budget is Social Security Medicare and Medicaid.
- About 11% of the budget covers other entitlement programs.
- About 38% of the budget is renewed annually:
 - 20% for Defense (though funding for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is not always handled in the regular appropriations process—but may be handled by emergency authorizations) ; and
 - 18% for non-Defense appropriations.

What is the Federal Budget Calendar?

Winter –

- The President sends his budget request to Congress by the first week in February.
- The Senate and the House consider the President's proposal and begin crafting their own budget resolutions.

Spring – Congress hopefully finalized its budget resolution.

Summer – Congress begins consideration of individual appropriations, entitlement and tax bills.

Fall –

- Congress finalizes appropriations and other budget and tax bills, as the President begins formulating its budget for the following year.
- The Federal Fiscal Year begins October 1st. The budget that is in place for October 1st, 2009, will be called FFY 2010.

What does the Congressional Budget Resolution do?

- It sets a total limit on how much the Appropriations Committee can spend on “discretionary” programs.
- It sets a revenue floor that is a lower boundary on how much taxes can be cut, if at all.
- It can give committees room to expand entitlements, or require them to cut entitlements and/or raise taxes through the fast-track reconciliation process.

This is from the Senate committee on Appropriations website and explains the difference between a program being authorized and its appropriation.

“Authorization vs. Appropriation

Authorization laws have two basic purposes. They establish, continue, or modify federal programs, and they are a prerequisite under House and Senate rules (and sometimes under statute) for the Congress to appropriate budget authority for programs.

Some authorization laws provide spending directly. In fact, well over half of federal spending now goes to programs for which the authorizing legislation itself creates budget authority. Such spending is referred to as direct, or mandatory, spending. It includes funding for most major entitlement programs. (Some entitlements are funded in annual appropriation acts, but the amounts provided are controlled by the authorization law that established the entitlement.) The authorization laws that provide direct spending are typically permanent, but some major direct spending programs, such as the Food Stamp program, require periodic renewal.

Discretionary spending, which is provided in the 13 appropriation acts, now makes up only about one-third of all federal expenditures. For discretionary spending, the role of the authorizing committees is to enact legislation that serves as the basis for operating a program and that provides guidance to the Appropriations Committees as to an appropriate level of funding for the program. That guidance typically is expressed in terms of an authorization of appropriations. Such authorizations are provided either as specific dollar amounts (definite authorizations) or "such sums as are necessary" (indefinite authorizations).

In addition, authorizations may be permanent and remain in effect until changed by the Congress, or they may cover only specific fiscal years. Authorizations that are limited in duration may be annual (pertaining to one fiscal year) or multiyear (pertaining to two, five, or any number of specific fiscal years). When such an authorization expires, the Congress may choose to extend the life of a program by passing legislation commonly referred to as a reauthorization. Unless the underlying law expressly prohibits it, the Congress may also extend a program simply by providing new appropriations. Appropriations made available for a program after its authorization has expired are called "unauthorized appropriations."

Longstanding rules of the House allow a point of order to be raised against an appropriation that is unauthorized. During initial consideration of a bill in the House (which by precedent originates appropriation bills), unauthorized appropriations are sometimes dropped from the bill. However, the House Committee on Rules typically grants waivers for unauthorized appropriations that are contained in a conference agreement. In the Senate, there is a more limited prohibition against considering unauthorized appropriations.

Both House and Senate rules require that when the Committees on Appropriations report a bill, they list in their respective committee reports any programs funded in the bill that lack an authorization. The information in the committee reports, however, differs somewhat from the information shown in this report. This report covers programs that at one time had an explicit authorization that either has expired or will expire. Unlike the lists shown in the Appropriations Committee reports, this report does not include programs for which the Congress has never provided authorizations of appropriations. For example, some Treasury Department programs have never received explicit authorizations of appropriations. They receive appropriations nonetheless because the authority to obligate and spend funds is considered "organic"--inherent in the underlying legislation or executive action that originally empowered the Treasury to perform particular functions.

As mentioned above, many laws establish programs with authorizations of discretionary appropriations that do not expire. Both the Appropriations Committee reports and this CBO report exclude programs with that type of authorization because its effect is permanent." *How do we find out who are appropriators?*

The internet makes this very easy. See: <http://appropriations.senate.gov>. The Senate Committee on Appropriations has a webpage that lists their members: <http://appropriations.senate.gov/members.cfm>.

For Members of the Senate Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies, please go to... <http://appropriations.senate.gov/labor.cfm>.

The House Committee on Appropriations website is: <http://appropriations.house.gov/>. For Members of the House Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies, please go to: http://appropriations.house.gov/Subcommittees/sub_lhse.shtml.

There are also a number of other resources for understanding budget and tax decisions available on the web:

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities website has a section on Health:
<http://www.cbpp.org/pubs/health.htm>

The following website provides information regarding Medicare coverage decisions which involve medical devices and new procedures which is recorded in the Medicare Coverage Database:
<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/mcd/search.asp>

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation www.rwjf.org

The Milbank Memorial Fund <http://www.milbank.org/>