

Raise Your Voice: Effective Strategies to Advocate for Policy Change

Marj Plumb, Executive Director
Coalition for a Strong Nebraska



Agenda

- Introductions
 - Spell your name
- Coalition for a Strong Nebraska
 - How a Bill Becomes a Law
- Nonprofits CAN Lobby
- Different Ways to Lobby
- How to Frame Your Lobbying Message
- Lobbying Practice
- Questions & Answers



100 Nebraska Nonprofits
focused on poverty
alleviation through public
policy engagement.



- Expertise
- Experience
- Skill Development
- Knowledge
- Interest





CSN Policy Focus

- Budget/Revenue/Taxes
- Civic Engagement
- Criminal Justice Reform
- Economic Security
- Food Security
- Education
- Healthcare
- Housing
- Immigration
- Trauma Justice





How We Do It!

- Member meetings
- Onsite & open trainings
 - For management & board
 - For clients & community
- Mentorship program

- Weekly policy update eNews
- Weekly policy update calls
- Bill tracking document
- Weekly Legislative blog



How Does a Bill Become Law in the Unicameral?



Nonprofits CAN Lobby



Why Focus on Nonprofit Sector?

- Over 12,000 Nonprofits (501c3's) in Nebraska
- Third largest industry with 1 in 11 NE workers employed by a nonprofit
- Over \$500 Million in tax revenue

“Each Nebraskan is touched every day by a Nonprofit, whether they know it or not.”

Ann Hindrey,
Chief Executive Officer,
Nonprofit Association of the Midlands



Nonprofit Voice in Policy Engagement

What	Definition
Education	Informing others about an issue/problem - usually fair and balanced.
Advocacy	Informing others about your opinion on an issue that affects your clients or community - usually with an opinion, can be about public policy, but not about a specific piece of legislation.
Lobbying	Informing elected officials, or the public, what your opinion is on a specific piece of legislation or ballot initiative.



Why Lobby: What is your vision?



STOP HUNGER NOW



Why Don't Nonprofits Lobby?

1. Confusion about laws regarding nonprofit's ability to lobby
2. Fear of public/donor reaction, not able to see connection to mission
3. Limited time and financial resources, including lack of staff capacity/skills/training



Nonprofits Can Lobby!



In 1934, Congress passed a law that went into the IRS code:

Non-profits can lobby as long as it's an *insubstantial* part of what they do.



Contacting legislators to *propose, support, or oppose* legislation or the government's budget process.

Urging the public to contact legislators to propose, support, or oppose legislation or the government's budget process.

Advocating the adoption or rejection of legislation.

WHAT IS LOBBYING UNDER THE INSUBSTANTIAL PART TEST?



Nonprofits Can Lobby & Know Their Limits!



In 1976, Congress addressed the vague statement about “insubstantial.”

They gave non-profits a *specific way to measure* their lobbying efforts – electing the 501h!



DIRECT

Communication
Legislator
Expresses a view
about specific
legislation



501h Lobbying Definitions

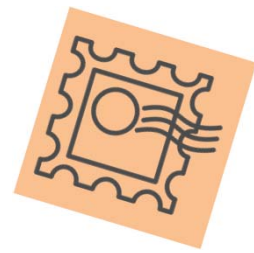


GRASSROOTS

Communication
General public
Expresses a view
about specific
legislation
Call to action



Fill Out the Form!



Form 5768
(Rev. August 2013)
Department of the Treasury
Internal Revenue Service

Election/Revocation of Election by an Eligible Section 501(c)(3) Organization To Make Expenditures To Influence Legislation
(Under Section 501(h) of the Internal Revenue Code)
► Information about Form 5768 and its instructions is at www.irs.gov/form5768.

For IRS Use Only ►

Name of organization GOOD WORKS, INC.	Employer identification number 12-345678
Number and street (or P.O. box no., if mail is not delivered to street address) 123 Easy Street	Room/suite
City, town or post office, and state Everytown, USA	ZIP + 4 12345-6789

1 Election— As an eligible organization, we hereby elect to have the provisions of section 501(h) of the Code, relating to expenditures to influence legislation, apply to our tax year ending **December 31, 2017** and all subsequent tax years until revoked.
(Month, day, and year)

Note: This election must be signed and postmarked within the first taxable year to which it applies.

2 Revocation— As an eligible organization, we hereby revoke our election to have the provisions of section 501(h) of the Code, relating to expenditures to influence legislation, apply to our tax year ending _____ and all subsequent tax years (until a new election is made).
(Month, day, and year)

Note: This revocation must be signed and postmarked before the first day of the tax year to which it applies.

Under penalties of perjury, I declare that I am authorized to make this (check applicable box) ► election revocation on behalf of the above named organization.

John Hancock **John Hancock, CEO** **Today!**
(Signature of officer or trustee) (Type or print name and title) (Date)



Best Practices

- File the 501h
- Form a Board Policy Committee
 - Create internal policies
 - Oversee policy advocacy
- Inform accountants, bookkeepers, accountants



“Ultimately, all high-impact organizations bridge the divide between service and advocacy. They become good at both. And the more they serve and advocate, the more they achieve impact.”

McLeod, H., “Creating High -Impact Nonprofits,”
Stanford Social Innovation Review, Fall 2007





For free coaching about laws impacting nonprofit advocacy:
advocacy@afj.org
866.675.6229

For free tools, fact sheets, and publications
www.bolderadvocacy.org



Training on Lobbying Rules



www.strongnebraska.org



Different Ways to Lobby



Direct v. Grassroots Lobbying

Direct Lobbying	Grassroots Lobbying
Communication	Communication
Elected Officials	General Public
Expresses a view about specific legislation	Expresses a view about specific legislation with CALL to ACTION



Lobby by Email/Phone

- Email
 - Who are you?
 - Bill number, position, ask
- Phone
 - Who should you talk to?
 - Identify yourself
 - Bill number, position, ask
 - Leave a message

