



MUSNAVC ADVOCACY

TOOL KIT

The MUSNAVC Advocacy Toolkit incorporates the efforts of two major organizations. We are grateful to the Military Officers Association of America for the guidance found in the 2022-2026 Strategic Plan.



The Association of Public Health Nurses has graciously granted us permission to use key elements of their Public Health Policy Advocacy Guidebook and Tool Kit.



Advocacy Information from the MOAA Strategic Plan 2022-2026

MOAA's main goals and strategies

The ADVOCACY strategic priority is to encourage the federal government to enact and maintain policies, compensation, and benefits that sustain an all-volunteer force of the size and quality needed to maintain a strong national defense, and that fulfills commitments to those who have served.

Our focus will consider the political climate, fiscal state, and the legislative priorities of Congress.

OUR SPECIFIC GOALS:

- Ensure regular military compensation and service-earned benefits for active duty, Guard, and Reserve members are not eroded by cost-saving measures that shift financial burdens onto servicemembers and their families.
- Ensure military pay increases are consistent with the private sector (Employment Cost Index); sustain COLA raises for retirees.
- Ensure changes to the military health system sustain beneficiary access to high quality care and prevent negative impacts on military medical readiness.
- Protect the value of the earned TRICARE benefit by opposing disproportional fee increases and ensuring coverage policy is regularly updated.
- Protect the TRICARE pharmacy benefit and advance program improvements that address beneficiary complaints and remove barriers to prescription medication compliance.
- Ensure timely access to service-earned VA benefits and oppose efforts to use veterans' disability compensation, health care, or other benefits to pay for VA improvements.
- Strengthen DoD-VA collaboration.
- Strengthen services to support wounded warriors, an expanding population of servicewomen and women veterans, and the caregivers who provide essential support.
- Improve survivor benefits.
- Protect the commissary benefit.
- Guard against cuts to uniformed service quality-of-life programs and advocate for oversight of public/private initiatives.
- Increase incentives for businesses to hire veterans and spouses, such as the Work Opportunity Tax Credit for employers.

OUR STRATEGIES:

- Execute our leadership role in The Military Coalition regarding compensation, entitlements, and health care issues for servicemembers, retirees, veterans, their families, and surviving spouses by maintaining collaborative leadership roles in the coalition and its committees.

- Conduct strategic Capitol Hill engagements aimed at fostering relationships with key legislators on committees and caucuses aligned with MOAA priorities. Develop and maintain strategic relationships between MOAA leadership and key legislators, and leading members of the executive branch, including the secretaries of Defense, Veterans Affairs, Homeland Security, Health and Human Services, and Commerce.
- Maintain and enhance MOAA's reputation of integrity and nonpartisanship via objective analysis and assessment of legislation impacting uniformed servicemembers and veteran communities.
- Increase member and nonmember participation in state and federal level advocacy activities.
- Develop an advocacy narrative for internal and external consumption, with emphasis on valuation in terms of financial and economic impact to uniformed servicemembers, retirees, veterans, their families, and surviving spouses.





Being an Effective Advocate to Influence Public Policy

Key Terms

Advocacy: strategy to influence policy makers when they make laws and regulations, distribute resources, and make other decisions that affect peoples' lives. The goal of advocacy is **policy change**. (APHN Advocacy Guidebook and Tool Kit)

Legislation: action by Congress, any state legislature, any local council, or similar governing body, with respect to acts, bills, resolutions, or similar items or by the public in referendum, ballot initiative, constitutional amendment, or similar procedure.

Coalition: a group of interdependent people focused on advancing or opposing an issue. A coalition's power to affect public policy lies in its ability to present a united front representing many, many members.

Spending:

Mandatory spending is made up of earned-benefit or entitlement programs, and the spending for those programs is determined by eligibility rules rather than the appropriations process. Mandatory spending makes up nearly two-thirds of the total federal budget.

Discretionary spending refers to the portion of the budget that goes through the annual appropriations process each year. Congress can choose to increase or decrease spending on any of those programs in a year.

Interest on debt is the interest the government pays on its accumulated debt, minus interest income received by the government for assets it owns.

Federal Budget Process

The federal budget cycle has four phases. The **first** phase is agency planning; the **second** phase covers budget review by the Office of Management and Budget. These two phases together amount to the President's budget formulation. The **third** phase is the Congressional appropriations cycle; and the **fourth and final** phase is the execution of the budget by the agencies starting October 1, the beginning of the fiscal year. Altogether, it takes the machinery of government well over two years to formulate, appropriate, and execute a single fiscal year's budget.

Understanding the Legislative Process

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THE US LEGISLATIVE PROCESS



SENATE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

IT STARTS WITH AN IDEA...

A BILL IS INTRODUCED BY A MEMBER OF THE SENATE AND ASSIGNED TO A COMMITTEE FOR REVIEW.

A BILL IS INTRODUCED BY A MEMBER OF THE HOUSE AND ASSIGNED TO A COMMITTEE FOR REVIEW.

BILLS MUST PASS THROUGH BOTH CHAMBERS BEFORE BEING SENT TO THE PRESIDENT.

THE COMMITTEE MEETS TO DISCUSS, AMEND, AND VOTE ON THE BILL.

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IF APPROVED, BILL PROCEEDS TO THE FULL SENATE FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION, AMENDMENTS, AND VOTING.

IF APPROVED, BILL PROCEEDS TO THE FULL HOUSE FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION, AMENDMENTS, AND VOTING.



A CONFERENCE COMMITTEE, MADE OF MEMBERS OF BOTH CHAMBERS, MEETS TO RESOLVE ANY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE HOUSE AND SENATE VERSIONS OF THE BILL.

BOTH CHAMBERS VOTE ON FINAL BILL

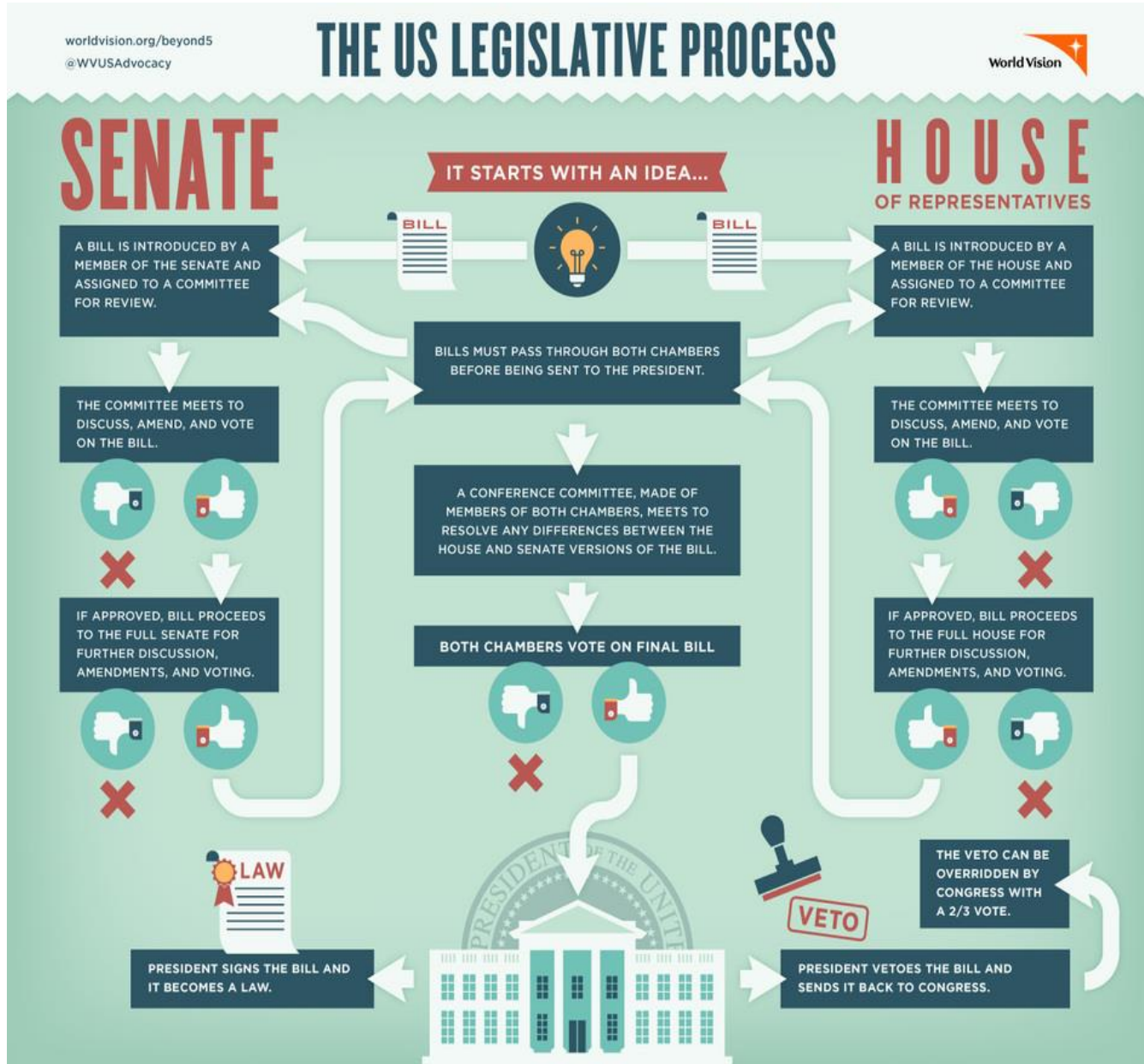


PRESIDENT SIGNS THE BILL AND IT BECOMES A LAW.

PRESIDENT VETOES THE BILL AND SENDS IT BACK TO CONGRESS.

THE VETO CAN BE OVERRIDDEN BY CONGRESS WITH A 2/3 VOTE.

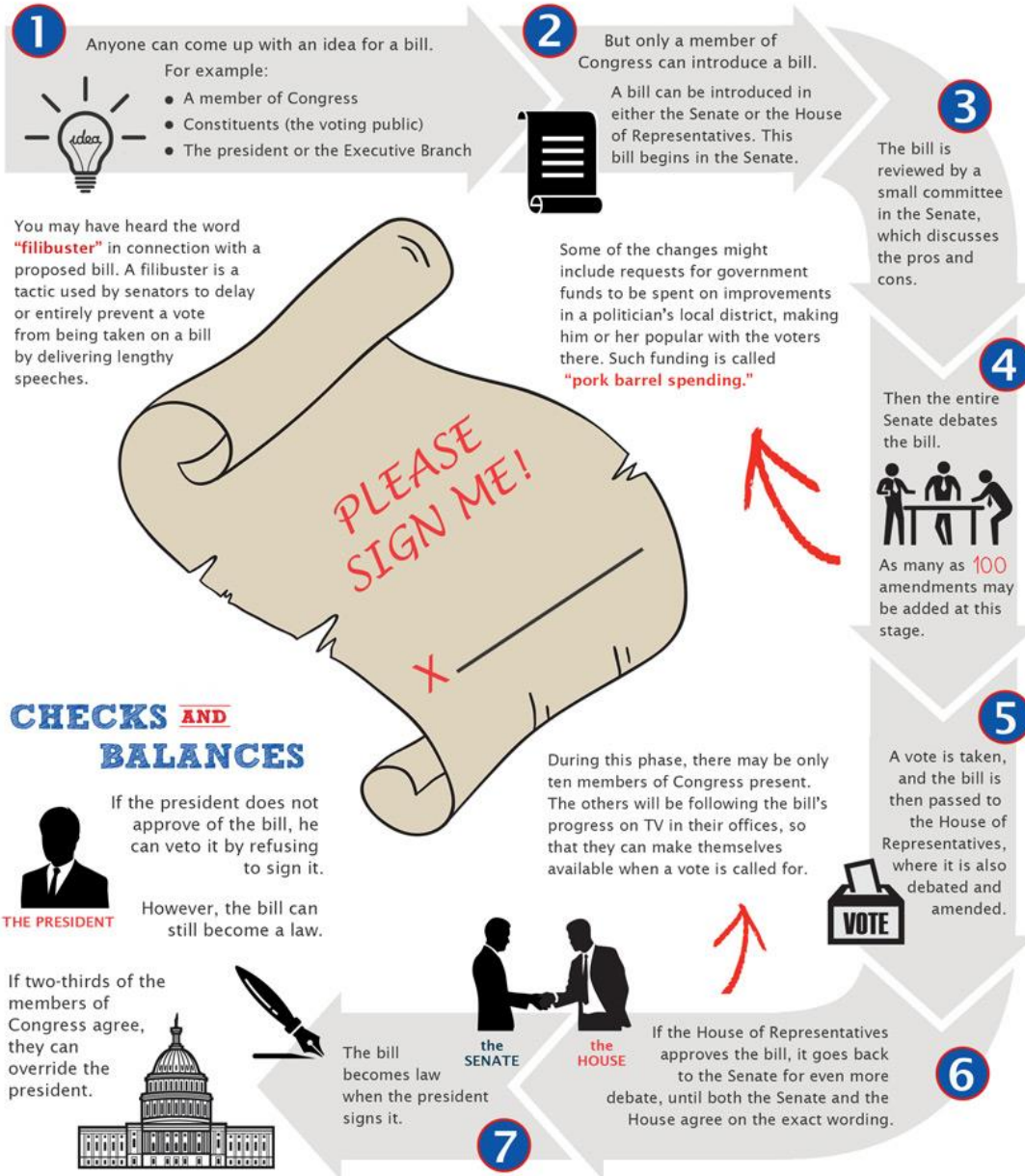
VETO



How a Bill becomes a Law



All U.S. laws start out as bills in Congress. For a bill to become a law can be a lengthy process, and many bills don't make it through. Of the approximately 5,000 bills that are introduced each year, only about 150 actually become laws.



Top Ten Rules of Advocacy

1. Get to know and the concerns, priorities and perspectives of the person(s) with whom you are speaking.
2. Acquaint yourself with the staff members for the legislators, committees and resource officials with whom you will be working.
3. Identify fellow advocates and partners in the community to better understand the process, monitor legislation, and assess strengths and weaknesses.
4. Identify the groups and other legislators with whom you may need to negotiate for changes in legislation; yesterday's opponent may be today's ally.
5. Foster and strengthen relationships with allies and work with legislators who are flexible and tend to keep an open mind.
6. Be honest, straightforward and realistic when working with legislators and their staff.
7. Be polite, remember names and thank those who help you.
8. Learn the legislative process and understand it well.
9. Be brief, clear, accurate, persuasive, timely, persistent, grateful and polite when presenting your position and communicating what you need/want from the legislator or staff member.
10. Be sure to follow up with legislators and their staff. Be a reliable resource for them today and in the future.

Writing Letters to Communicate with Legislators

1. State your purpose in the first paragraph.
2. If the letter pertains to a specific piece of legislation, identify it accordingly, e.g., House bill: H.R.____, Senate bill: S. ____.
3. Be courteous, but to the point. Include key information and use examples to support your position. Describe your practice and the patient population you serve, if appropriate.
4. Address only one issue in each letter and try to keep the letter to one page.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. Use your own stationery, not hospital or agency stationery. Do not give the impression that you are speaking for an organization unless you are a designated spokesperson.
8. Know the committees on which your legislators serve and indicate in the letter if the bill is being brought before those committees.
9. Timing is important. Try to express your opinion on a bill when it is in committee.
10. Sign your name with RN after it. Include any other credentials you may have, such as PhD, DNP, PHN, APHN-BC.
11. 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.
12. Be sure your correct address is on the letter and the envelope.
13. Edit carefully. Invite a friend or colleague to read your letter and provide feedback.
14. Read your letter aloud and listen to the flow, grammar and tone. Revise your letter if needed.
15. Keep a copy of all letters that you send.

Rules for an Advocate to Remember

1. You are a source of information. Legislators have limited time, few staff members and, at times, limited interest on an issue. You are the one who can fill in the information gap.
2. Maintain credibility. Give accurate information.
3. Know your supporters. The legislator will want to know what group, individuals, state agencies and/or other legislators are working with your organization on the issue(s) you are presenting.
4. Know your opposition. Be prepared by understanding the opposition's viewpoint. Anticipate their arguments and provide the legislator with rebuttals and answers to those arguments.
5. Remember that you are developing a relationship. Make the legislator aware of any personal connections you may have, even if you think they are insignificant. It could make a difference.
6. Do not be afraid to admit you don't know. If your legislator asks you for information you do not have or asks something you do not know the answer to, tell them you do not know the answer and offer to obtain the information for them. Provide this information in a follow-up meeting, phone call, or letter.
7. Be specific when you are asking for something. When you want a vote, information or answers to questions, ask directly and expect that you will get an answer.
8. Follow-up. After the meeting write a thank you note for the meeting. Later, follow-up with an inquiry to ask if the legislator did what had been agreed to in the meeting, such as voting a certain way. It is important that you thank legislators if they did, or ask them for an explanation if they did not vote or otherwise take a position as had been agreed to.
9. Don't burn your bridges. Remain calm. It can be easy to get emotional over issues you feel strongly about. Remember to leave your meeting on good terms so you can go back to the conversation later. As noted above, your strongest opposition today could be your strongest ally later down the line.
10. You are the boss. Your tax money pays the legislators' salaries, staff and office operations. You should be courteous, but not intimidated. Most legislators will be thankful for your input.