



Legislative 101

What can school board members do?





Be Informed and Know Your Story

The first step in effective advocacy is to get informed:


- Talk to your staff, parents, students, and fellow board members to thoroughly understand an issue.
- OSBA provides a host of resources on education bills, advocacy, and the legislature.
- Check out the Oregon State Legislature webpage and get to know your legislator before you meet.
- Be comfortable with your knowledge of an issue before you talk to others.
- Remember, no one is more qualified than you to talk about what is going on in your district and schools.



Serve as a Resource

There are many ways to serve as a resource:

- Respond to OSBA's legislative alerts by contacting the appropriate legislator when critical legislative issues need a voice during the legislative session;
- Demonstrate leadership by promoting legislative advocacy among member boards within your region;
- Formalize legislative advocacy on your board by creating a standing agenda item for legislative updates;
- Appoint members of your board as liaisons to local governments to further engage your community leaders by providing education updates and promoting advocacy opportunities; and
- Ask to speak to civic and community groups on issues of importance to education.



Contact Your Legislator and Develop a Relationship



There are a number of ways you can develop relationships with your legislators, start by:

- Attending their constituent coffees and town halls;
- Introducing yourself at community meetings;
- Making an appointment to meet them in their district;
- Serving as a resource on public education issues;
- Meet them in Salem; and
- with the support of your board and superintendent, invite them to visit your schools and participate in community meetings.



Share Your Story and Ask for Their Support



When sharing your story and asking for your legislator's support:

- Identify the issue clearly and succinctly. Tell them why the issue it is good or bad for the students in your district.
- -Be direct. Ask your legislators to support or oppose a bill or policy.
- -Don't be put off if you sometimes deal with staff. Legislators are very busy and relationships with staff are equally important.



Let us Know



Tell OSBA when you've contacted your legislator and what you discussed.

This will help us support you in your advocacy efforts and make sure we are presenting a unified front.

Tips for Communication





Identify Yourself

Make sure the legislator understands who you are and which school district, education service district, or community college you represent.



Be Brief

Get to the point quickly and be specific. It's about the kids, not about the adults.



Use a Local Angle

Explain how a bill will positively or negatively impact the schools and students in your community. Remember that you're not only the legislator's constituent, you are also a fellow elected official.



Thank Legislators

Always thank them for their time. Even if they are not supportive of your position, you may need their support on another issue in the future.