

Advocacy, Lobbying & Political Activity

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What is advocacy?

A key role of a staff or board member is to act as an advocate for her organization. Advocacy means that the individual *represents the organization in the community*, articulates the mission, & supports & defends the message.

What is lobbying?

The IRS defines lobbying as “carrying on propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence *legislation*.” This means *activities that try to influence legislators* to pass laws that are favorable to one’s cause. There are two categories:



Direct lobbying (legislators & government officials)



Grassroots lobbying (changing public opinion)

What is political activity?

...an intervention by any means in a political campaign *in favor of or against a candidate.*

This does not include get-out-the-vote drives or voter education...

What is allowed for 501(c)(3) organizations?

- May engage in lobbying as long as it is not a substantial part of activities...
- Federal grant funds may not be spent on lobbying
- Political activity is strictly prohibited
- 501(h) option

Consequences...

- Loss of tax exempt status
- Obligation to pay excise taxes on money improperly spent

Another option:

1. A 501c4 affiliate can be formed (PACs)