

WHY ADVOCACY? WHY ME?

EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY – EVERY VOICE COUNTS!

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Sheila A. Schuster, Ph.D.

Kelly Taulbee

***WHY* Advocacy??**



What Is Advocacy?

Advocacy is Education with Passion

- An Advocate is One Who Listens
- An Advocate is One Who Connects
- An Advocate is One Who Speaks
- An Advocate is One Who Acts
- An Advocate is Anyone Who Has a Passion about an Issue or People!

A Democracy requires that the
VOICE of the **PEOPLE** be heard.



Frankfort Will Happen

- Whether YOU are there or not...
- What happens in Frankfort affects YOU!
 - So, YOU can choose to be a victim of the system or YOU can choose to influence the system



How Does Advocacy Work?

- Legislators are elected by YOU.
- Therefore, legislators are elected to serve YOU.
- The Governor is elected by YOU.
- Therefore, the Governor and Executive Branch are there to serve YOU.
- A Democracy requires that the VOICE of the PEOPLE be heard.
- Policy-makers cannot serve YOU unless they hear from YOU!

If YOU Don't Speak Out... Who Will Speak?

- Who understands the issues better than YOU do?
- Whose voice will be heard?



Why Should That Voice Be YOURS?

Because YOU...

- Care – and care passionately.
- Are knowledgeable about YOUR issues.
- Are able and willing to share with others (decision-makers and other citizens) what YOU know and experience.
- Provide accurate, important information.



YOU are an **ADVOCATE** because
YOU VOTE and **SPEAK OUT**...



and because
YOU can
influence others
to vote and to
speak out!

What Do You Need to be Effective?

- *Understand the process of policy-making
- *Identify the policy-makers
- *Specify your goals – short and long-term
- *Know the time frame for action
- *Engage others in the fight
- *Prepare for defense, as well as offense
- *Remember...it's all about relationships!

Focus Your Advocacy

- Advocacy can be focused at the individual, community, state or national level
- Policy advocacy can focus on legislation and/or on regulation and on government action from the Executive Branch.
- What is the policy that needs to be changed?
- Who has the power to change it?
- Who do those policy-makers listen to?
- How can you be one of those people?

Advocacy Gets Action!

- First, have those you work with identify their unmet needs & look for trends across individuals and settings
- Lots of individuals with the same unmet needs = identifies gaps in the system
- Gaps in the system demand advocacy for additional information, resources, services to be provided

Creating Supportive Communities

- What would your community look like if it was supportive of each person and responsive to their needs?
- How would your community be different if people had their basic needs met?
- It is helpful to lay out a description of what your community has been like in the past and what it would look like going forward if the supportive changes were made.
- How can you and your colleagues learn from community leaders how they see the community and what changes need to be made to be more supportive of residents?

Making Connections

- Most powerful statements you can make:
“I am your constituent...and I vote!”
- Also powerful: “I work with your constituents in my role as....”
- How do you identify your policy-makers?
- How do you make connections...and then stay in touch with them?
- This is a PROCESS...not a one-time deal

Issue Education

How do you make your case?

- Policy Briefs – lay out the research
- Talking Points – use bullets, lots of white space, illustrations
- Scripts – help keep the message consistent across speakers
- Fact Sheets – good as “leave-behinds”, make sure they have your contact info

YOUR Voice Is Magnified in Coalitions and Working Partnerships...

When we are all aiming for the same target!



Lifting Up Voices

- Goal: Putting a Face on the Problem
- Personal stories tell it best
- Data – putting the numbers behind the people and their stories
- Videos – can grab attention
- Powerful statement: “I am your constituent...and I have a problem that I need your help to solve.”

Engaging the Community

- Rallies / Press Conferences
- Calls to Action / Action Alerts
- Social Media – lots of Twitter!
- Phone-Calling and/or Personal Visits
- Well-planned testimony
- An identifying color or slogan is helpful
- Utilize the media to keep your story alive

Shifting the Narrative

- Lifting up the existing narrative...here's what is happening now. Here is the change that we need... why and how.
- Op-Eds and Letters to the Editor – don't forget the weekly community papers
- Written communications to policy-makers using consistent messaging & phrasing

You & Local Advocacy

- Actions taken by the Metro or City Council will likely follow the same legislative flow as with the KY General Assembly.
- Serve on Boards or Advisory Committees of Local Institutions / Organizations.
- Participate in Community Needs Surveys done by Health Departments, Hospitals, or ADDs.
- Attend Town Hall Meetings on various topics hosted by local leaders.
- Meet with your council person and other public leaders to let them know you are a resource.

Remember – Politics are
LOCAL – YOUR Story Can be
Told Wherever YOU Are!



How a Bill Becomes a Law



You & The Legislative Process

- You have identified a need that should be addressed with a public policy change.
- Is there a policy-maker (or several) who have addressed this issue in the past?
- Be aware of the power of politics and be strategic in picking a sponsor.
- Work with your sponsor on timing, co-sponsors, communicating with leadership.

Inside Politics

- Our issues are neither partisan nor political, but the process is!
- The party who holds the majority holds the power
- Those in leadership have great influence, as do committee chairs...but every legislator has a vote and a voice



2026 KY General Assembly

There are 38 Members in
Kentucky's Senate:

32 Republicans

6 Democrats

Senate President: Robert Stivers

Minority Leader: Gerald Neal

**Recently, one elected Senator (Robin Webb, SD18) switched her party from D to R, and a Special Election to fill a vacancy in SD37 introduced a new member this year (Gary Clemons (D), SD37).*



2026 KY General Assembly

There are 100 Members of Kentucky's
House of Representatives:

80 Republicans

20 Democrats

Speaker: David Osborne

Minority Leader: Pamela Stevenson



2026 Legislative Calendar

January 6th – First Day of 2026 Budget Session

January 9th – Last Day to File for Election/Reelection in 2026 Primary/General Elections (if a Democrat or Republican candidate)

March 2nd – Last Day to File a Bill in the Senate

March 4th – Last Day to File a Bill in the House

March 31st-April 1st – Concurrence Days to Agree Upon House & Senate Versions of the Same Bill

April 2nd-13th – Veto Recess Days

April 14th – Veto Override Day

April 15th – Last Day of Session & Sine Die Adjournment

May 19th – Kentucky Primary Election

June 1st – 2026 Interim Begins

Early July – Bills Without Emergency Clauses or Other Dates Assigned Become Law

November 3rd – General Election

Mid-November – Caucus Retreats Begin, Including Leadership Elections for 2027

December – 2026 Interim Ends

Making Kentucky's Laws

- A piece of legislation – a bill – can only become law if it is passed by both the House of Representatives and the Senate and is signed by the Governor – or not vetoed by him/her.
- Only a member of the General Assembly can introduce legislation in the session.
- Bills can vary in length from only a single line to hundreds of pages.

Meetings of the Legislature

- The KY General Assembly meets every year, beginning in January.
- In the even-numbered years, the session is **60 days** in length. The biennial (2-year) **budget** is passed in this session.
- In the odd-numbered years, the session is **30 days** long.
- Occasionally, the Governor calls a **Special Session** to deal with one specific issue.

Context: 2026 Legislative Session

- The 2026 KY General Assembly session is a “long” session (60 days), running from January 6th to April 15th.
- In even numbered years, state lawmakers must take up and adopt a new biennium budget. The State Budget is always accompanied by an equally important Revenue bill.
- In 2026, all 100 House members and half of Kentucky’s Senate members are up for re-election. This year, it will be Senators in even-numbered districts that are up for election.
- Additional priorities of the legislature this year include Medicaid (a “MOAB” bill), a “MAHA” (health) bill, adopting a new State Road Plan, and passing measures to possibly help address affordable housing and child care needs.
- Also be on the lookout for action around curtailing DEI programs, ICE and immigration issues, and bills affecting community health such as fluoride removal and immunization policies.

Context: Rules for GA 26

- The Capitol is closed for construction and will likely be closed for 5-7 years.
- The Annex is open to visitors, although construction and new visitor policies may make parking and overall access more difficult. Chamber sessions will be held in a temporary building with no public viewing on-site nor room for large rallies.
- Every session, the [House](#) and [Senate](#) adopt new rules.
- Both Chambers continue to have options to limit debate and have selected to expedite legislation through the process more quickly than ever.
- When a bill is received in the House from the Senate, the House has the ability to immediately assign bills to a committee for hearings, rather than procedurally routing them through the Rules Committee or the Committee on Committees.
- Currently, the rules stand so that once a bill is assigned to committee in either the House or Senate, it could be considered for a vote at any point, without a requirement for a "posting". Once reported from committee, it can immediately be called to the Floor for its final (3rd) reading and then a vote that same day.
- KVH and AAN have updated their Legislative Accessibility Guide to give you the most up-to-date information for navigating the legislature and the legislative session. The Guide is available here: [2026 Accessibility Guide](#)

Words to the Wise...

- ❖ Legislating public policy is not always a logical and rational process.
- ❖ Those who love sausage and the law should watch neither being made!

Introduction of The Bill



- All bills are introduced by delivering them to the House or Senate Clerk when the legislature is in session
- If a bill begins in the House, it will have a bill number that begins with “HB__” and then a number; a bill will have “SB__” if it begins in the Senate
- A bill will keep the same number all the way through the process – whether it is in the House or in the Senate



Committee Referral

- Once a bill is introduced in the session, it is given a number and sent to the Committee on Committees
- The Committee on Committees in each chamber is dominated by the majority party (R in the House, R in the Senate)
- They will decide which Committee will hear the bill; the Chair will decide if the bill is actually heard and voted on

A faint, stylized illustration of a committee meeting. Several people are seated around a large, curved table. Some are looking at documents, while others are gesturing. The illustration is in a simple, cartoonish style with muted colors.

Committee Consideration

- Committee meetings are open to the public, with a set Committee schedule for the session
- Additional Committee meetings may be called to move a bill quickly through the process
- After the bill is heard in Committee, it is voted on and then reported out as favorable (passing) or unfavorable. If the vote in Committee is unanimous, the Committee may recommend that the bill go to the Consent Calendar.

Committee Consideration

A faint, stylized illustration in the background shows a group of people sitting around a large, curved table, engaged in a meeting or hearing. Some are looking at documents, while others are gesturing or talking. The illustration is in a simple, cartoonish style with muted colors.

- It is critical to educate all of the Committee members about the bill BEFORE the hearing to encourage its passage, to change (amend) it or to defeat it
- YOUR voice can be heard by telling legislators how YOU feel about the bill, by testifying on the bill, or by attending the hearing, perhaps wearing a button/sign about the bill!
- A bill can be killed when the Committee Chair does not call it for a hearing and a vote

Readings of the Bill

- All bills must have three readings before they can be voted on for final passage.
- Typically, the bill is given a reading each day after it has been favorably passed by the committee to which it was assigned.
- This timeframe gives members the opportunity to read the bill and to file floor amendments to possibly revise the bill.

Speedier Passage of a Bill

- If the Rules Committee (very powerful, controlled by the majority party) wants to speed up the passage of a bill, it can give the bill multiple readings before it goes to the assigned committee for consideration.
- When that bill is then heard and approved by the committee, it can be voted on by the entire chamber that day...without giving members much notice or time to study the bill before voting.

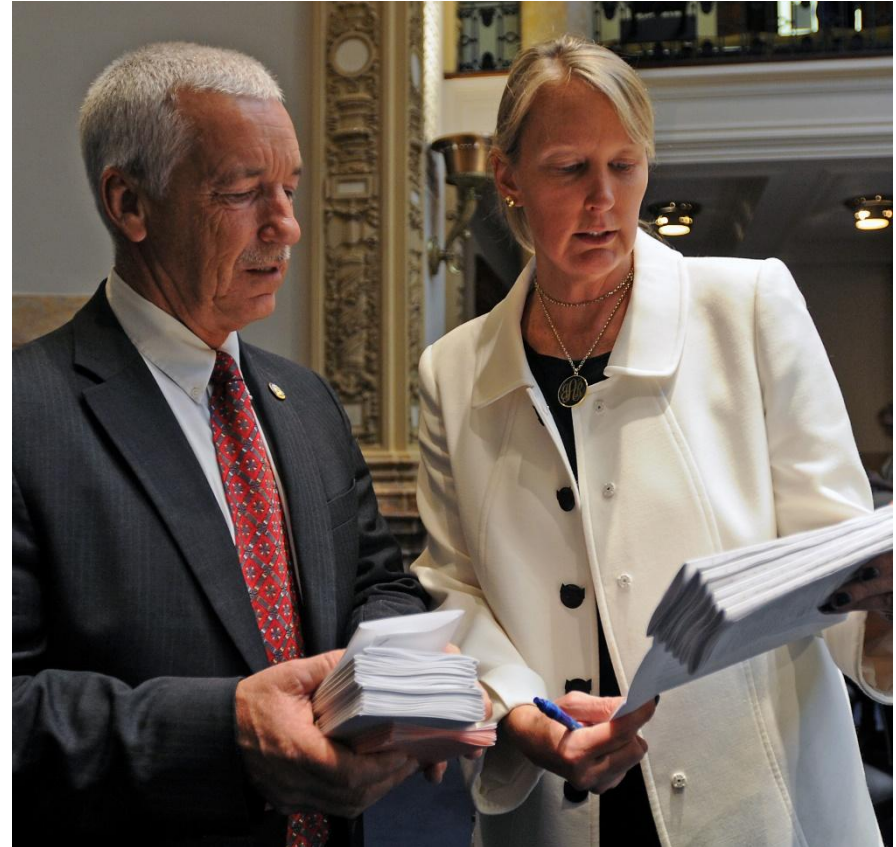
The Floor Vote for Passage



- The Majority Floor Leader makes a motion that the bill should pass and that begins debate on the bill
- The bill's sponsor speaks about the bill, others speak for or against it, and any amendments that are filed are debated and voted on individually
- The vote for passage of the bill is finally taken!

What Next? We Do It Again!

- If a bill passes in one chamber, it is sent to the other chamber where it follows the same process:
- Referred to a Committee
- Heard and voted on by the Committee
- Given First, Second and Third Readings
- Vote for final passage on the floor of the chamber



After Passage in Both Chambers

- Both chambers **MUST AGREE** on the **final** form of each bill, a process called “concurrence”.
- If either chamber fails to concur in amendments made by the other, the differences must be reconciled by a Conference Committee of selected Representatives and Senators
- The compromises agreed upon by the Conference Committee are then taken back to both chambers for their approval



Governor's Action

- The Governor may sign a bill, permit it to become law without signing it, or veto it
- A veto may be overridden by a simple majority of the members of each chamber (51 Representatives and 20 Senators)
- The Governor has 10 days (excluding Sundays) to act on a bill after it has been received or it becomes law automatically



Becoming Law

- A bill becomes law approximately 90 days after the General Assembly adjourns, unless it contains an emergency clause, or, a specific effective date assigned within the bill
- Bills with an emergency clause become effective immediately upon the approval of the Governor, or engrossment of the bill with the Secretary of State without the Governor's signature



We Passed the Bill...

Now What?

- Putting the statute in place is the work of the Legislative Branch of Government.
- Implementing the statute, including the **regulation process**, is the work of the Executive Branch of Government.
- The regulation's job, once approved, is to "Cross the T's and Dot the I's"!
- Your advocacy continues in monitoring the regulations and implementation of the law.

How Will YOUR Voice Be Heard?

- Identify YOUR Senator and Representative
- Go to www.legislature.ky.gov and put in your home address under “Find Your Legislator”
- Contact them at home, especially on the weekend, identify yourself as a **constituent**
- Contact them in Frankfort by Message Line, phone, email, letter, social media and/or visit
- **CALL MESSAGE LINE: 1-800-372-7181**
- Follow the action at www.legislature.ky.gov

How Will YOUR Voice Be Heard?

- Stay informed & connected:
www.legislature.ky.gov
www.advocacyaction.net
www.kyvoicesforhealth.org
- Be positive, be polite, but always be persistent
- Remember all politics are LOCAL
- Remind yourself to say “Thank You!” even if you only got a toe inside the door
- Reach out and educate others who can help
- Believe that your voice can really make a difference...because it can!

Important Words to Remember...

“Never forget that a small group of thoughtful people can change the world.

Indeed, that’s all that ever has.”

--Margaret Mead

Are We Advocating or Lobbying?

- All lobbying is advocacy, but not all advocacy is lobbying!
- Kentucky requires those who are paid to interact with and to influence legislators to be registered with the Legislative Ethics Commission. These folks are lobbyists.
- If you are interacting with legislators – even if attempting to influence them to vote for or against legislation – but are not paid to do so, you are a citizen-advocate, not a lobbyist.
- Staff of agencies who are supported by federal funding may be prohibited from lobbying around specific legislation.
- The Alliance for Justice is an excellent resource. Their information is available at: www.bolderadvocacy.org

Questions?

Sheila A. Schuster, Ph.D.

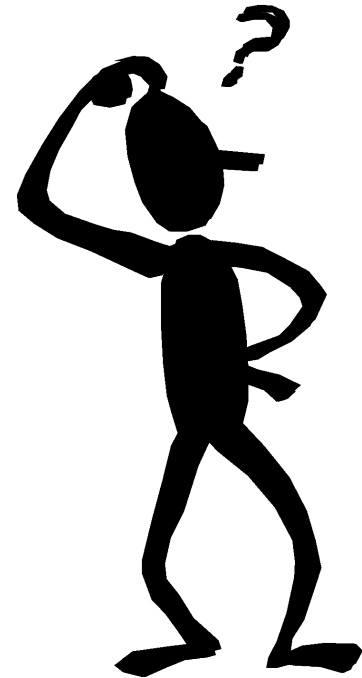
Advocacy Action Network

kyadvocacy@gmail.com

Kelly Taulbee

KY Voices for Health

kelly@kyvoicesforhealth.org



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