



# Your Advocacy Calendar

## January: Legislator Outreach

At both the federal and state levels (and often the local level), January is a time for new legislators to start “learning the ropes.” Use this as an opportunity to introduce them to healthcare policy issues through a letter, email, phone call, or ideally hosting a legislative briefing at your hospital. Where appropriate, start building a relationship with any new staff people.

Action item \_\_\_\_\_

## February: Follow the Dollars

At most levels of government, February marks the start (or continuation) of the budget process. As many advocates are looking for resources, this is a good time to be sure you know what’s going on. At the Federal level, check out the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities at [www.cbpp.org](http://www.cbpp.org). At the state level, learn about budget processes through the National Conference of State Legislatures ([www.ncsl.org](http://www.ncsl.org)) or on your state legislative website.

Action item \_\_\_\_\_

## March: Hone Your Message with the Message Formula

To be agreed with, you’ll need a message that resonates with your audience. Build that kind of message using the message formula below:

- Hello, my name is [ ] and I’m from [ ] (establishes relevancy)
- I am here to talk to you about [policy / relationship ask]
- Knowing of your interest in [what policy issues is the person you’re talking to interested in?] we think you’ll be interested as well
- This is important to the people I represent because [personal story]
- That’s why we really hope you’ll [ask]
- I’d like to follow-up by [follow-up ideas]
- Can I get contact information for all the appropriate people in your office?

Action item \_\_\_\_\_

## April: Media Messaging

Radio? TV? Social Media? Newspapers? Each venue can help you get the word out, but each wants different things. Radio wants sound bites, television wants pictures, newspapers want stories and social media all of the above. Find your “hook” both in terms of hot topics and reporters’ needs and you’ll be on your way to free publicity in no time. Consider following the NC Hospital Association and sharing messages from their Facebook & Twitter feeds.

Action item \_\_\_\_\_

**May: Get to Know the Staff**

In many cases, getting to know staff people can move your issue forward even faster than getting to know the policymaker.

Action item \_\_\_\_\_

**June: Make a Relationship Building Ask**

You don't always have to ask a legislator to cosponsor (or stop) a controversial bill. Sometimes you can simply ask him or her to make a statement, talk to your group or participate in a hospital visit. What kind of action might you ask them to take that would get them actively engaged, without being too complicated?

Action item \_\_\_\_\_

**July: Social Media Outreach**

Social media is here to stay and can be an incredibly useful tool for effective advocacy. "Like" your legislators on Facebook (you don't have to actually "like" them). "Follow" your legislators on Twitter. Find mutual connections on Linked-In. All these steps will give you new insights in to their interests and actions.

Action item \_\_\_\_\_

**August: Site Visits**

Showing a legislator or staff person something "on the ground" helps them understand how what you're asking for connects to the real live people they represent. If session has adjourned, August is a prime time for visits. Visit the NCHA website for a step-by-step guide to hosting an effective hospital visit.

Action item \_\_\_\_\_

**September: Election Strategies**

Getting like-minded citizens out to vote helps get people who understand your views in to office, which in turn makes it far more likely that policymakers will agree with your views. Consider running a voter registration drive or become engage in GOTV efforts at your hospital – you'll be making a difference on your policy issues and for democracy as a whole! Many resources can be found on the NCHA website.

Action item \_\_\_\_\_

**October: Town Halls**

Legislators often set up meetings in their districts to hear the views of their constituents. This is particularly true during an election year. Find out when these meetings will take place and make plans to

attend. Who knows? If you stop by a little before or after you may be able to talk to the policymaker directly.

Action item \_\_\_\_\_

### **November: Vote & Host Legislative Briefings**

Be sure to vote and encourage the employees at your hospital to vote. Ask your CEO to send a message to all hospital employees with links to finding their polling place, printing a sample ballot and learning the important dates for the election. Following the election, begin outreach to newly (or re-) appointed legislators by inviting them into your hospital for a legislative briefing to meet key members of your staff and learn more about the issues that impact access to healthcare in their community.

Action item \_\_\_\_\_

### **December: Host Legislative Briefings & Build Partnerships**

Continue your efforts to educate lawmakers – both returning and new – about the policy issues that impact healthcare and your hospital. Also, consider other stakeholders in your community – the businesses your hospital partners with and serves, the community leaders who personally visit your hospital, other healthcare providers and nonprofit organizations. Are there opportunities to partner together in a meaningful way to address your issues in the coming year? Coming together collectively will strengthen your position and impact at the legislature.

Action item \_\_\_\_\_