Advocacy Work With Your Elected Officials

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What does that even mean?

An advocate = a champion
To advocate = to support

Identify what topics are important to:

- Your students
- Your institution
- Your office

What does that even mean?

Coordinate with your administration before taking any action

- Can you do this as a Financial Aid Administrator, as a representative of your office?
- Should you act as a private individual, omitting your institutional information? Or providing a disclaimer?

Why should *I* do this?

If not you, then who?

Are you a financial aid administrator?

Are you or have you been a student and financial aid recipient ?

Are you a parent or grandparent?

Why should *I* do this?

For the 116th U.S. Congress (2019-2021)[1]
435 Representatives and 100 Senators:

- 128 non-white members
- 131 females

Average age: House of Representatives: 57 | Senate: 63

Average net worth: Over half of Congress members: $1M or more [2]
Median US household income: $68K [3]

Library of Congress Research Guide[1] | Wikipedia entry for wealth of Congress[2] | US Census information for median household income [3]

And who are we talking about?

Federal and state legislators

- Do you know who your Senators and Representatives are?
- Do you live and work in different Congressional regions?
- What committees do they each sit on?

Just how do I do it?

Consider your student population and their needs

Identify what issues are highest priority

- Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act?
- Pell Grant funding increase?
- Continued FAFSA simplification?
- Regulatory relief?
- Elimination of origination fees?

Coordinate with administration

- Will they need a draft of written materials? An outline of a verbal conversation?

Just how do I do it?

Once you've decided on priorities, also decide with whom you'll be meeting

- Is this in-person? Or by Zoom, phone, or email?
- On your own? With someone from your institution? On a NASFAA coordinated day?

If you are scheduling the meeting, submit an email on the Congress member's website or call the office and speak with the Education staffer

Just how do I do it?

Consider the logistics of an in person meeting

- Flight or drive time
- Parking availability
- Map of building/facilities
- Sufficient time if doing more than one visit in a day
- Comfortable shoes if doing a lot of walking

Just how do I do it?

Consider the logistics of a virtual meeting

- Will you be coordinating with others from your institution?
- Will you be coordinating with others at different institutions?
- What technology will you use? And have you done a test run? Does everyone have the meeting details?
- Do you have time zone issues to keep straight?
- Do you have materials that you will reference? If so, send them ahead of time.

What can I say? Provide? Attach?

In person or virtual:

- Be prepared, create an agenda
- Have data relevant to your institution
- Consider what to provide to them
  - (Charts? Figures? Other data?)
- Share personal experience
- Take business cards or contact info

Via email:

- Bullet points
- Attach charts/pdfs/other visuals

Tips: practice beforehand | create a script of sorts so everyone knows their role/points to make

NASFAA Resources

https://www.nasfaa.org/state_advocacy_toolkit

Advocacy is needed at the state and federal levels!

Getting started presentation
User guide
Letter and email templates
Talking points
Student advocacy manual
Education Commission of the States (ECS) State Education Policy Watch List

NASFAA Resources

https://www.nasfaa.org/Advocacy

Legislative Tracker
Investing in Our Future
Making Financial Aid Work for All
Federal Budget and Appropriations page
Advocacy Pipeline
Take Action
Capitol Recap
Advocacy Resources

Follow up

Follow up!

Send an immediate thank you email

Follow up again in 30-60 days

Update the NASFAA Policy Team on your conversations with federal offices

Thank you!

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