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I. INTRODUCTION: WHY WE HAVE LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY?

Much of our nation’s legislative arena focuses on children and families, and for this reason, Jack and Jill of America, Inc. cannot afford to stand on the sidelines and watch while others make decisions which have a tremendous impact on our members, and all children and families across America.

Legislative Advocacy is stated as the third aim and objective of the Jack and Jill of America, Inc. Constitution and Bylaws, and Legislative Advocacy is intended to be a primary activity of all Jack and Jill of America, Inc. chapters. The third aim and objective states: “... to support all national legislation aimed at bettering the conditions of all children.” Therefore, we must educate ourselves and become comfortable in the action of advocating to legislators, to share our views and our expectations.

The National Legislative Committee (NLC) plays a vital role by actively engaging Jack and Jill of America, Inc. members and acting as the driving force behind the implementation of national legislative initiatives for the organization. By motivating our members and others to exercise civic rights and responsibilities, and by holding elected officials accountable, we already have and will continue to make an important difference.

This handbook is a guideline and framework for legislative advocacy, and the implementation of programs to educate and generate civic awareness within Jack and Jill of America, Inc. membership. This handbook intends to bolster participation in the many aspects of legislative processes.

General information, procedural information, as well as sample activities and ideas for outreach and action are included to assist you in supporting as well as launching and refining legislative programs.

Being a voice for children who have no voice, Jack and Jill of America, Inc. is one of the premier organizations with aims and objectives developed to enhance the quality of life for children and families. So, we must first know what that legislation is and how we can utilize local programs and our national legislative agenda to advocate and move our concerns to action.

CRITICAL POINTS TO REMEMBER AS YOU READ THIS BOOKLET:

- We must tell our story and present a unified voice.
- We must work together at the chapter, regional and national level to undertake legislative initiatives to underscore our united front, and present a clear message to legislative leaders.
- Jack and Jill of America Inc. is over 10,000 members strong and has always focused on community giving.
- We have always cared about all children Jack and Jill of America, Inc. must retain its constituency status as an organization working on behalf of all children and families and command a focus on legislative activities. As the nature of our society changes in some ways and
remains the same in others, we must work together to ensure we meet the challenges of our ever-evolving society. We must work together to ensure that the legislative response to our issues for children and families meets Jack and Jill of America, Inc.’s needs and goals.

Congress and the state legislatures exist to represent the views and interests of constituents. Jack and Jill of America, Inc. will be challenged by the fact that the competition for the attention and time of elected officials is great. Every year thousands of groups converge on Washington, D.C. to compete for Congress’ attention, and some groups can afford the services of lobbyists. Jack and Jill of America, Inc. does not hire dedicated lobbyists and it is incumbent upon us as members to stand tall and make our voices be heard. We rely on our +12,000 member voices to ensure we command both the attention and time of our elected officials at all levels.

II. CHAPTER, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE CHAIRS: HOW IT WORKS

The National Legislative Committee’s role is to provide leadership and collaborative development to strengthen Jack and Jill of America, Inc.’s legislative program. This is accomplished by providing our members with a greater understanding of the legislative process and the issues that affect the lives of our children. By involving our families, our mothers, our children, and especially our teens in this process, we become empowered to actively engage in the legislative process.

Specifically, the Committee’s duties are to:

- Support legislation aimed at bettering the conditions for all children as approved by our National Executive Board (NEB).

- Educate and create awareness on national legislative issues concerning the national initiative and agenda as adopted by the organization.

- Encourage programs that will increase membership interest, knowledge, and involvement in legislative activities.

- Encourage programs to assist the regions and chapters in their implementation of legislative activities.

- Increase the overall comfort level of Jack and Jill of America, Inc. members in contacting legislators and taking action on behalf of children and families.

The National Legislative Committee adopts a focus on a particular initiative or initiatives that support the objectives and recommendations from Jack and Jill of America, Inc.’s biennial national convention.
Such initiatives have included educational equity, teen pregnancy prevention, voter education and awareness, juvenile justice, violence, and youth development.

**National Legislative Chair**

The National Legislative Chair responsibilities are:

- To chair the national legislative committee
- To assist with the development, coordination and support of the national legislative agenda
- To facilitate implementation of the initiative(s) as determined by the organization’s objectives and the NEB
- To serve as a critical information link to the members on the committee. To collect and disseminate information on legislative activities and action needed to the Regional Chairs and others as appropriate.
- To maintain current information and updates on the national legislative initiative; and
- To work with the national office to organize and compile regional and chapter legislative chair contact information and email-blasts alerts

**Regional Legislative Chair**

The Regional Legislative Chair has membership on the National Legislative Committee and is also responsible for communicating the national legislative initiative and agenda to all chapters throughout their respective regions. Additionally, the Regional Legislative Chair has the following duties:

- To chair the regional legislative committee which is comprised of the chapter legislative chairs.
- To assist chapter legislative chairs with planning and implementing regional and/or chapter activities that support the national legislative agenda.
- To assist with the creation and compilation of a chapter legislative chair contact list within her region.
- To disseminate information to the region and its members on regional and national legislative activities and action needed.
- To work on the national committee and chair the regional committee as it relates to all aspects of legislative activities. Each chapter shall name a Chapter Legislative Chair and implement a legislative activity.
Chapter Legislative Chair

The chapter’s legislative chair communicates, advocates, motivates and influences action around the legislative and advocacy activities in the chapters. This advocacy role is intended to better the lives of children in the local communities. The Chapter Chairs are encouraged to attend Cluster Area Work Days or the equivalent in your region, attend the On the Hill Summit, and participate on regional legislative committee conference calls at least quarterly.

The Chapter Chair also reviews the national legislative initiatives and priorities and works to coordinate and implement local legislative activities within the chapter. She may choose to work with other chapter committee chairs to combine programming around social, service and legislative areas if this works effectively in supporting the legislative agenda. Additionally, each chapter is encouraged to name and support a teen legislative chair.

Teen Legislative Chair

The Teen Legislative Chair works at the teen level. The Teen Legislative Chair’s Duties are to:

- Chair the chapter’s teen Legislative Committee
- Facilitate and coordinate legislative chapter activities working with the teen chapter president, the teen advisor and the chapter chair of the legislative committee for the mothers
- Participate in conference calls and chat sessions involving the teen legislative chairs
- Attend Cluster Area Work Days (or its equivalent)
- Review National Legislative Initiative and Priorities and coordinate with the local teen chapter’s interests
- Be an advocate and coordinate ideas and discussions with other teens
- Attend the Jack and Jill of America Inc. On the Hill Summit Event

III. LEGISLATIVE VERSUS POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

Jack and Jill of America, Inc. is a non-profit organization and adheres to Internal Revenue Service guidelines for nonprofit organizations. Consequently, commercial interests and candidates for public office shall not be endorsed by the organization. Neither the name of Jack and Jill of America, Inc. (at any level) nor the name of any officer in an official capacity for Jack and Jill of America, Inc. shall be used in any connection with a commercial concern or with any political interest. Additionally, no one should
ever offer an elected official anything in return for their support, and never discuss campaign finances, PAC contributions or endorsements.

However, Jack and Jill of America, Inc. may endorse or oppose pending legislation and assume a stance on matters of public policy if so recommended by the National Legislative Committee and approved by the National Executive Board of Jack and Jill of America, Inc. Legislative Activity refers to those activities that tend to influence the status or outcome of impending bills before a legislative body (i.e. the state assembly, congress, etc.) This type of activity may mold public opinion and motivate others to act by supporting or opposing specific legislative issues, bills, or philosophies Jack and Jill of America, Inc. as an organization supports.

Examples:

- Formulating Policy Positions on Specific Bills
- Preparing and Presenting testimony before legislative committees
- Initiating telephone calls, sending faxes, writing e-mails and letters to show support and urge actions on legislation
- Encouraging and supporting voter registration, voting, and voting drives
- Sponsoring or facilitating meetings, speakers (if candidates, must be all candidates and all parties represented with no endorsement)
- Preparing and distributing pamphlets and other literature to stimulate or cause action on legislation
- Circulating petitions, contacting legislators, and/or participating in efforts to impact legislative issues

Political Activity is defined as any action intended to influence the nomination, election or appointment of any person to public office. Like legislative activities, political activities are governed in part by the tax status of the organization. Certain organizations are prohibited from directly or indirectly engaging in political activity. While there are various levels and types of non-profit organizations, Jack and Jill of America, Inc. is a nonpartisan organization and must refrain from engaging in political activity.

Examples (WHAT NOT TO DO):

- Raising funds for legislators and candidates.
- Making contributions to candidates’ campaigns.
- Distributing pamphlets regarding a specific candidate.
- Endorsing candidates.
IV. THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS QUICK OVERVIEW OF CONGRESS AND THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

“All Legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives.” (Article I, Section 1, of the United States Constitution).

What does it take for a bill to become a law?

What is a “Joint Resolution”?

What does a Legislative Director do?

The aforementioned are just some of the questions our membership may have. As an advocate, members should have a general knowledge of the process to effectively stimulate action for important issues. In this section, there is information that will refresh your knowledge of Congress and provide insight as you are walking the halls of the Capitol or calling your member of congress to discuss a piece of legislation.

How a Bill becomes a Law?

A unique aspect of our legislative process is that ordinary citizens, community-based organizations, nonprofit organizations and a host of other political participants have a hand in shaping our nation’s laws. In fact, anyone can draft a bill. Interest groups, as well as congressional staffers often develop legislative initiatives and proposals.

However, the bill needs the backing of a Senator or a Representative since elected officials are responsible for introducing legislation (i.e. a bill).

There are four basic types of legislation: bills, joint resolutions, concurrent resolutions, and simple resolutions.

Of these four categories, a bill is the form used most often.

Introduction of Legislation

In the Senate, members introduce bills and resolutions either by formally introducing them from the floor and making a statement about their purpose or by presenting them to the Presiding Officer. Senators are permitted to object to the introduction of a bill or resolution. When this occurs, introduction is postponed until the following day. If there are no objections, the bill is assigned a legislative number and referred to the appropriate committee.
Bills and resolutions may be printed in the Congressional Record (thomas.loc.gov) with consent by the Senate.

In the House, bills or resolutions are placed in the “hopper,” which is held by the Clerk of the House. Bills or resolutions are assigned legislative numbers and referred to the appropriate committee.

The title, number and committee reviewing the bill are then published in the Congressional Record. There is no limit to the numbers of bills a legislator may submit. Legislative numbers include a designation of where it originated.

HR signifies a House Bill, and S denotes a Senate Bill. Letter designations are followed by a number. For example, HR 1688 passed in the House – The All Healthy Children Act. Referral to Committee

All bills are referred to at least one committee. Standing committees study and review bills and resolutions.

In the House of Representatives, there are 22 standing committees. The Senate has 16 standing committees.

Most committees have subcommittees that handle specific issues and areas. Additionally, both chambers can establish “select” and “joint” committees for oversight and housekeeping tasks.

Complete listings of House and Senate committees and subcommittees can be found at www.house.gov and www.senate.gov.

However, selected committees are referenced in the On the Hill section of this booklet.

**Committee and/or Subcommittee Review**

In the Senate, committee assignments are made by the Parliamentarian according to the primary subject matter of the bill.

In the House, the jurisdiction of various committees is set by Rule 10 of the House of Rules Committee. Drafting techniques and other parliamentary strategies may also influence the choice of the committee to which a bill is referred.

The committee chair decides whether the full committee or a subcommittee will review a bill. If it is passed to the subcommittee for evaluation, it will later proceed to the full committee for another round of deliberation.

During committee/subcommittee review, all aspects of a bill are evaluated. Committees/subcommittees often hold hearings for testimony from experts, members of the executive branch, public officials, supporters and opponents of the legislation to gather information on the scope and purpose of the bill. It is important to note, that even in this early stage of the legislative process numerous bills fail.

When a committee does not act on a bill, it is unlikely the bill will move ahead to the next step. The Progress of any bill is influenced by several factors.
Priorities of leadership, of the committee chair, of other committee members and of constituents and interest groups affect the viability of any measure. If the bill moves forward, the subcommittee chair and members often meet to make changes in the legislation, and this is known as the mark-up process.

**Mark-up**

After the hearings are complete, a bill is ready for mark-up. Mark-up is the phase where all the provisions are reviewed, and efforts are put forth to reach agreement on necessary modifications.

However, committee/subcommittee members vote to reject or accept these changes. Hearings and mark-ups take place in both committees and subcommittees. If the committee chair refers a bill to a subcommittee, these members will hold hearings and mark-up the bill.

The bill will then move to the full committee. If the chair does not refer a bill to a subcommittee, all action will take place in the full committee.

**Committee Action**

Once all hearings and mark-ups occur, the bill will go before the full committee to discuss the bill, consider the amendments, mark up the legislation and may present a modified bill reflecting its views.

They will then vote on whether to recommend it to the full House or Senate – depending on where the bill originates.

If a majority of committee members agree to the bill, it will be reported and become eligible for action on the floor of the House or Senate. This is called “ordering a bill reported.”

If the committee approves, a report will be written about the bill. This report contains the text of the bill and an explanation of the committee’s rationale for its actions.
Floor Action

There are three important phases of floor action that a bill must pass prior to becoming a law.

A bill is placed on a specific legislative calendar, debated and voted on by legislators.

In the House there are several different legislative calendars: union calendar, house calendar, corrections calendar, private calendar, and discharge calendar (see Glossary of Terms).

The Speaker of the House and the Majority Leader determine the order of bills on the calendar.

In the Senate, there is only one legislative calendar. When a bill reaches the floor of the House or Senate, there are rules and procedures governing legislative debate.

In the House, this is known as the House Rules Committee. These rules determine the length of time for discussion about amendments and revisions.

After considerable debate, legislators vote, and a bill is rejected, passed or “recommitted” (returned) to the appropriate committee.

Action in Second Chamber

If the bill is passed, action moves to the other body of Congress, also known as a chamber. For example, if the bill originated in the House it will move to the Senate.

A Senator will introduce the bill or resolution, and it will go through the same process: committee/subcommittee, hearings, mark-up and floor action.

The second chamber can take several actions when a bill is passed by the first chamber. It may approve the bill as received, reject it, ignore it, change it, or create its own separate version of the legislation.

Once the second chamber has passed its version of the bill or resolution, both pieces of legislation will be sent to the conference committee.

Conference Committee Action

To become law, a bill must be identical when passed by both the House and Senate. To ensure they are the same, the conference committee is comprised of Senior Senators and Representatives of the appropriate House and Senate Committee established to resolve differences in related bills and resolutions.

These members are known as Conferees. Conferees review amendments made to each bill and recommend whether to accept or reject them.

When a compromise bill is agreed upon, the final version must be voted on again by both the Senate and House of Representatives.
If no compromise is reached, new committee members may be appointed to review the bills. If members are still unable to form a compromise, the legislation may fail.

**Final Steps**

The final bill, approved by both chambers (House and Senate), is sent to the President to be signed. The President has the option of signing it into law or vetoing it. If the President signs the bill, the bill becomes law.

If the President vetoes the bill, it will be returned to the House and the Senate with the President’s reasons for the veto.

A two-thirds vote in both the House and the Senate is required for an override. If the two-thirds vote is obtained, the bill becomes law. If not, the bill dies.

Note: if Congress is in session and the President does not sign or veto a bill within ten (10) days, the bill will become law. This is sometimes called the 10-day limit.

If the President does not sign the bill and Congress adjourns prior to the 10-day limit, the bill does not become law. This is known as the pocket veto.

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**V. On The Hill Legislative Summit**

The National Legislative Committee coordinates and organizes a national Jack and Jill of America, Inc. On the Hill Summit ("OTH Summit"). The OTH Summit is held biennially in Washington, DC for four days. Jack and Jill of America Inc. members from across the country converge on the Capitol to advocate for children and family issues, with a special focus on the current initiative for that program year.

The objective of the OTH Summit is multi-faceted. It is intended to familiarize members with the process, the legislators and how the members are to work with and through the legislators to achieve results.

Meeting with the legislators, introducing them to Jack and Jill of America Inc., and letting them know that Jack and Jill of America Inc. is active and involved is important, especially where there may be pending legislation.

The OTH Summit may include workshops, panels, lobbying initiatives on pending legislation, legislative briefing, receptions with featured speakers, to include Jack and Jill of America Inc. representatives as well as prominent legislators, and a special activity for the teens.
Attending the high-profile event is critical but staying in touch with the legislators and developing next steps once members return home is equally important to ensure action is taken.

The On the Hill Summit has two primary objectives, which are set out below. What happens before Jack and Jill of America Inc. gets to Capitol Hill and what happens after Jack and Jill of America Inc. goes on the Hill are equally as important. Knowing how to work with and through congressional staff is an important part of advancing the organization’s legislative agenda.

For example, U.S. Senators generally employ 25-30 staffers, whereas House members are more likely to have 9-10 staffers.

Staffers include such positions as district representatives, press secretaries, legislative aides, staff assistants, and interns. Committees and subcommittees also have an assigned staff, which include chiefs of staff, staff directors, staff assistance, and clerks.

Additionally, there are caucuses such as the Congressional Black Caucus, that is not a part of Congress, but its members are made up of African American Congressmen (House and Senate Representatives) that advance issues.

Throughout this document, Legislator and Congressman are used interchangeably. The term Congressperson is referenced only for editorial convenience and is intended to represent men and women as applicable.

The importance of committees may depend on the initiative or legislation being advanced. Therefore, the committees that advanced the bill of interest and/or dealt with bills of this type were of interest. A complete listing of committees and subcommittees, visit www.house.gov and www.senate.gov.

In addition to being on Capitol Hill, Jack and Jill of America, Inc. would like to see an On the Hill Day at every state capital in each of the states where Jack and Jill of America, Inc. chapters are located -- to inform and create awareness about local issues that affect children and families.

VI. COMMUNICATING WITH CONGRESS
COMMUNICATION METHODS AND DEVELOPING YOUR CONSTITUENT SKILLS

There are many ways in which you can contact your elected representatives to let them know of your concerns, priorities, needs and desires. These include personal visits, e-mails, letters, social media and telephone calls.
Communicating with the right tools is one of the most important factors to effective advocacy. Regardless of which method you use to contact them, always remember to be polite, make a cogent and assertive (yet respectful) argument, and always ask for a reply or response.

Visit the Jack and Jill of America Inc. website www.jack-and-jill.org or contact your regional legislative chair to see if talking points are available on a particular issue.

It also helps to always transmit something in writing, so that they have a record of your interests and ask for a written response in return, so you have an indisputable record of their positions and promises.

For the name of your Congressman, visit www.senate.gov and www.house.gov.

For the congressional website, you will need your nine (9) digit zip code. Visit the Jack and Jill of America Inc. website to obtain the name of your regional legislative chair. While on the website, select the legislative tab to find your chair by region.

**Phone Calls**

Phone calls to elected officials can be an effective and important tool when immediate pressure is present and there is a need for sudden legislative action and letters are too slow.

When calling to make an appointment or calling to speak with staff or the legislator by phone, the following may be helpful. Clearly state your purpose for the meeting and/or the call.

- Identify yourself by name.
- Clearly identify the subject, title or bill number to which your call refers, if applicable.
- Be clear on what side of the issue you are on and what action you would like your official to take.

**Helpful Hint:** If you don’t have an appointment, don’t just show up at a legislator’s office expecting to meet, even if you have called. Chances are you won’t get to meet with the official and at best you won’t have the time and attention you need to express your views.

At worst, you may not be remembered in a favorable light. However, once there, you can ask again, if the legislator is available. It is possible his or her schedule changed.

Do not be put off by the staffers, they are our friends!

**Personal Visits**

For most members of the House and Senate, the best way to communicate with them is a personal visit. A face-to-face meeting may be the most effective way to communicate your concerns to legislators.
You can visit alone, but may find it more enjoyable and effective to visit with others. This can be a first step to developing a lasting relationship.

**What is the Goal of the Visit?**

Advocate your position, and build a relationship with your legislator.

**How Frequently Should You Visit?**

Once or twice a year is probably as much as a Member of Congress will see you. However, you can write as often as you wish. State legislators are more accessible. All legislators are more likely to see you if you represent an active group of voters, than if you go alone.

**How Many People Should Go on a Visit?**

You can go alone, although two to five people will fit comfortably in most D.C. and local offices. Fewer people allow more discussion; large groups tend to allow the legislator to dominate and give speeches. If the issue involves children/youth, consider taking a well-spoken teen with you. Provide the teen with information to effectively share his or her perspective.

How to Visit Five steps to remember when planning your visit are:

1. Make the appointment,
2. Prepare,
3. Visit
4. De-brief,
5. Follow-up.

**Step 1: Making the appointment**

1. Call the legislator’s office and make an appointment:

   Get the local office number from their website go to www.senate.gov for Senators and www.house.gov for House of Representatives.

2. Ask to speak to the appointment secretary. Ask for a meeting. State the issue you want to discuss, how many people will be coming, whether you represent a group, preferred dates for visiting, and how long you want to speak with the legislator.
3. Most legislators will also ask that a letter be faxed or mailed to their office with the same information, so you may want to have that letter prepared in advance. However, in the event of a scheduling conflict, you may be asked to meet with staff. You will still want to make a similar personal presentation to the staff member asking that it be passed along to the legislator.

4. Ask the staff member about his or her involvement in the issue(s) you’re advocating and suggest that they contact the Jack and Jill of America Inc. Headquarters to act as an information resource on children and family issues. (Ex. “If you need information on issues relating to children and family, please give us a call.”

5. Be sure and leave the contact information for Jack and Jill of America Inc.’s Headquarters and promptly notify your regional chair that you have made such a suggestion.)

**Helpful Hint:** The earlier you call, the more likely you are to get a date you want. It often takes weeks to get an appointment with a national legislator.

6. Most visits run between 10 and 30 minutes, but don’t hesitate to ask for more, especially if you’re visiting the legislator during a workday in their office. Write down the appointment secretary’s name for future use.

7. You can visit legislators either in Washington, D.C. or in a local office. The legislator may be more accessible back home, and more people can participate. However, there’s nothing like a visit to the capital to demystify the legislative process and help people overcome their fear of advocacy.

8. Furthermore, staff who work on the issues are in Washington, D.C., and building a relationship with them may be a key to success.

**Helpful Hint:** Many Legislators are in their hometowns or districts during weekends, and “traditional district work periods,” around most holidays, to include: Memorial Day, Labor Day, Fourth of July, early spring, and during the month of August. Many legislators can also be found in their home districts after Congress adjourns, usually in October or November. Or, just call their local office to obtain the local schedule or when they will host or hold a town hall meeting in their district.

9. Keep in mind, the best time to build a relationship is before you need an issue discussed. Participating in The Summit or inviting the legislator to your conferences is a great first step to establishing a relationship with the legislator.
Step 2: Prepare

1. Establish a profile of the member you are going to meet. Research the legislator’s personal background and career, their congressional committee memberships (committees and subcommittees), positions on issues and review their voting record.

This information can be found on the following websites: (www.congress.org or www.house.gov and www.senate.gov, and to obtain quick and easy voting records – see www.vote-smart.org).

Additionally, the member may also have his or her own personal website. Google the congressmen’s name, if there is not a link from the congressional website to locate his or her personal website. You may also wish to review the past press releases. The press releases will give you a sense of what he or she has been doing to date; the committee and subcommittee assignments should give you insight into the issues the legislator tends to be more involved in. If possible, try to relate your concerns to the committee assignments.

2. Decide what your message will be.
   a. Choose no more than two issues.
   b. Make a list of “key talking points” and include ways that constituents are affected. (See sample talking points in Summit Briefing Packet)
   c. Open with small talk to place everyone at ease, but be careful to send a signal that you have something specific to discuss.
   d. Bring with you a one-page fact sheet that outlines your concerns with any pending legislation and what you would like the legislator to do. (See talking points in Summit Briefing Packet)

3. Decide who will say what.
   a. Who will start the meeting to say why you’ve come?
   b. Who will state each key point? Who will ask which questions?
   c. Who will ask the legislator to take specific action?
   d. Who will thank the legislator at the end of the visit?

Helpful Hints:

People don’t have to talk in order to go on the visit, but it’s better to share the communicating – it shows the legislator that everyone thinks for himself or herself.
Be prepared to explain (in one sentence) any bills you refer to (see section 2d. above); the member may not be familiar with the bill or when it is scheduled for a vote. Show concern for people and bring a national and local perspective to the issue and use personal stories as illustrations, if possible. Do a dry run with each person briefly stating his or her part of the message. You’ll discover where there is confusion and overlap of points.

Visits may be cut short. Be prepared to state your message and make your request in a few minutes.

4. Prepare responses.
   a. How do you expect the legislator to respond? Prepare answers.
   b. Be prepared for the unexpected. You may have to walk with your legislator on his or her way to the next meeting.

5. As stated above, take a fact sheet, newspaper article or any supporting information that supports your view.
   a. Give it to the legislator at the end of the meeting.

6. Decide what specific action you want and be prepared to ask for it.

Step 3: Visit

1. Be on Time. If you’re late, call ahead, as even a few minutes may cause you to miss your meeting and affect your credibility; Dress Professionally, also do not wear anything that may be distracting (i.e. cartoon characters, extremely bright colors, etc.)

2. Take the initiative. After your introduction, say why you’re there. Everyone introduces himself or herself. Mention your professional or relevant background, and any experience on the issue. Then, mention that you are a member of Jack and Jill of America Inc. and your home state.

3. [Example: ...I am a member of Jack and Jill of America Inc., whose headquarters is located right here in Washington, D.C., and I reside in ______.]

4. With over 10,000 members, we speak on behalf of children because we want them to have access and opportunities that will help them achieve, succeed and grow into competent, successful and socially responsible voters of our communities, and we need your help as resources are needed...]

5. Thank the legislator for something--a vote, a speech, an electoral promise or their willingness to hear constituents’ views.
6. State your message briefly and succinctly. State your view, your reasons for having that view ("key points"), and other constituents who share your view (including organizations). [Use your “talking points” to help you state key points briefly.]
7. Contact your Regional Legislative Chair or refer to the Summit Briefing Packet.
8. Ask for a specific action. Be sure to ask how they plan to vote. If they say that the bill is being rewritten or amended, ask for the legislator’s position on the bill as originally written.

**KEEP ASKING UNTIL YOU GET SOME ANSWER.**

If they don’t have a position, ask how they plan to decide. Example I: ...therefore, I’m/we’re respectfully asking that you cast your vote against the proposed bill H.R. 5319; or Example II: ...because _____ (i.e. healthcare) is such an important issue, I hope you will sign the letter that is circulating among Senators that is calling for an increase in funding for ... (name the program or issues); or Example III: ...I hope you will sign on and endorse _____ bill as a cosponsor.

6. Let your representative know that you wish to stay in touch. If time, ASK FOR INFORMATION.

**Step 4: Debrief**

Learn from the visit and decide what to do next. If you visited as a group, go to a place where you can sit together and talk. (Do it now while everything is fresh).

1. Quick impressions: Each person takes a turn filling in the sentence, “I feel ______ about the meeting because ______.” If some people dominate, say, “You’re saying important things, but let’s hear from everyone quickly.”
2. What went well? Make a list together.
3. What did you learn? But No negative comments!
4. How did the Legislator or staff person respond to the group? (i.e. Non-committal, bored, interested, hostile, encouraging, defensive, uncomfortable...?) How can you tell? (Body language? Words? Tone of voice? Short meeting?)
5. What did you learn about the legislator? Any insights into his or her “world view,” motivation to be in politics, feelings about your issues, feelings about you as constituents, reliance on staff for information, or methods for handling meetings with constituents? [If you met with staff, did she/he give you insights about the legislator? Did staff tell you about the legislator’s views or voting behavior?]
6. What should the next step be? (Letters? media? local action? another visit?)
7. Who will send a follow-up letter to the legislator or staff to thank them for meeting and restate the key points?

8. Send a summary of your visit to your regional and chapter legislative chairs, actions and copies of any letters received from the Legislator.

**Step 5: Follow-up**

1. Write a letter to the legislator or staff person, thanking them for the meeting, briefly restating key points and reminding them of commitments they made.

2. If you promised to do something, do it. It’s important to your credibility.

3. Report on the visit to your chapter and/or region.
   Ask people to write a letter (mentioning that you briefed them). Bring paper, envelopes, stamps, and pens.

4. Call local media groups to report what happened on your visit after you have notified your regional legislative chair, chapter president and obtained approval from your national legislative chair and national headquarters.

**Letters and Emails to the Congressman & the Newspaper Editor**

A letter to the editor of the local newspaper or publication that mentions the name of a legislator is almost certain to be read by that official or someone in that official’s office. So, getting your letter printed is key. The letter is an effective way to communicate with the legislator and the public concurrently. Here are some helpful tips for writing your letter to the editor:

If you get a commitment from your legislator, report this, so that it can be tracked, as the National Legislative Committee should be aware how this legislator or legislation could be helpful in specific legislative situations for the organization.

- Respond to an editorial or article that appeared in the paper previously. So you might begin your letter with something like, “...I was interested to learn more about ______”s (name of official) position on, when I read in your paper that...”

- The shorter the letter, the better chance it will be printed.

- Have more than one person write a letter on the same topic you’ll be writing on (i.e. other chapter members) Make this one of your mother’s or teen legislative activities.

- Be sure and provide your contact information so that the newspaper can verify the authenticity of the letter.
• If you are commending your legislator or other elected official in your letter to the editor, make sure you send a copy to the legislator or other referenced elected official as well. (The letter doesn’t have to get printed to send a copy to the legislator).

• If you are writing multiple letters, don’t use a form letter. Use the same talking points but change the format a bit between the letters. (You may have three or four different styles that everyone alternates with, or just provide writers with talking points, etc.) Email allows you to offer a more detailed rationale and it is quick.

General Tips:

• Know the legislator’s district and how to spell his or her name.

• Address the letter The Honorable___________ (i.e. The Honorable John Lewis).

• Have more than one form letter, if you must use form letters, so that you can alternate instead of sending mass-produced letters or e-mails.

• Write on one subject per letter.

• Keep the letter to one page, unless two pages is necessary.

• Make sure the exact bill numbers and bill titles are accurate. Know the stage of your bill (i.e. where it is in the legislative process – has it passed, is it in the Senate, is it in committee, did it die, etc. – for more information, see the legislative process section of this booklet).

• Contact your legislator when a bill is still in committee.

• Mention the positive alternatives supported by Jack and Jill of America Inc. or others when opposing a bill (if that is the organizational position that is being taken).

• Explain how the issues affect you, your organization, your family, your community at large.

• Make sure you provide your contact information in the letter. Be very specific about what action you need from your legislator on an issue (i.e. vote “yes” next Wednesday on HR 1688).

• Send a thank you note if the legislator votes in support of your bill or viewpoint.

• Send a copy of your letter to your regional and national legislative chair to keep them apprised of your legislative activities.

• Don’t give up once a vote has been taken. Continue to communicate.
VII. HOW TO BE AN ADVOCATE: MAKING A DIFFERENCE WITH LEGISLATION

The effect of legislation, both at the state and federal level, can be more direct than most people realize. Thousands of bills on children and family issues are introduced each year. Because these bills ultimately impact and affect all families, some more than others, it is important to take action when possible. Awareness is the first step.

It is said, “When you know better, you do better.” However, more than awareness is needed, which is what this advocacy booklet is all about. Concerned, knowledgeable people ensure legislation enacted will benefit all people affected, and certainly those who need it the most need action. Involvement is critical to the legislative process and members of Jack and Jill of America Inc. can choose to be involved in a variety of ways through the various activities. In addition to contacting the legislators as stated in previous sections and before we discuss some sample programming activities, some general tips are shown below to help you make a difference through legislation:

- Coordinate your efforts with other chapters or with your regional legislative chair
- Support chapter and regional legislative activities
- Suggest Projects to be considered
- Keep track of current legislative issues in your community
- Read the updates and information that are sent on the national initiatives
- Attend the On the Hill Summit and take a teen
- Vote and encourage others to vote Invite your State or U.S. Senator and/or House of Representative to your Area Work Day Clusters/Regionals to speak or to sit on a workshop panel and once they’re there, utilize the opportunity to educate them about Jack and Jill of America Inc. and its agenda for children and families

VIII. CHAPTER LEGISLATIVE PROGRAMMING

A. Project Idea Bank for Chapters

1. Capitol Tour. Visit the state or national capitol for a tour, a briefing on current legislative health issues, and have lunch with legislators (You may also want to discuss the legislative process with your legislator).
2. Legislative Retreat. Host a legislative retreat and provide information and training to participants.

3. Letter Writing Campaign. Initiate a letter writing campaign to inform and encourage support for select legislation and/or issues in the community.

4. Legislative Workshop. Host a legislative workshop. Invite lobbyists, local legislators and perhaps other JJ chapters. See section XI for planning details.

5. Legislative Forum. Host a legislative forum. Have a panel discussion and invite lobbyists and several legislators to be members of the panel. The goal can be to educate Jack and Jill of America Inc. members and others about the political process.

6. Meet the Politicians. Invite local politicians to speak at a chapter meeting (especially during a big election year) about pertinent campaign and healthcare issues, and to answer questions from members.

7. Help pass legislation. Select proposed legislation. Speak with the author of the legislation about ways to help. The chapter may want to consider conducting surveys, compiling statistics, and writing letters to educate the public.

8. Target Legislators. Produce a list of all chapter members, indicating each member’s U.S. and/or State Senate District and U.S. and/or State Representative District. Have members use list to contact their legislators in support of health care, education or juvenile justice legislation.

9. Host a luncheon. Host a legislative luncheon with Jack and Jill of America Inc. members, state legislators, and perhaps invite other organizations. The goal could be to increase political awareness and strengthen Jack and Jill of America Inc.’s legislative agenda.

10. Host a Candidate Town hall Meeting/Debate. Organize a town hall meeting or debate amongst candidates for elected positions. The theme should focus on children, families and Jack and Jill of America, Inc.’s legislative agenda.

11. Team up with other local organizations that support similar or related healthcare issues and jointly work on a project. Pass on updates and legislative information received from the national and regional legislative chairs and others, via email, to your chapter members.

B. Involving Our Children in the Process:

1. Ages 2-5 - Walk through the neighborhood or set up a table at the local Department of Social Services with other Jack and Jill of America Inc. families and distribute information to urge neighbors to ask their legislators to support a bill; or distribute pamphlets about existing services or issues that map to the national initiative.
2. Ages 6-8 - Be responsible for a Kids Voting table/booth at a local precinct during an election. (For more information visit www.kidsvoting.org) or contact your local board of elections for more information.

3. Ages 9-11 - Attend a workshop on how a bill becomes law. Mothers can host the workshop.

4. Ages 12-18 - Draft a mock bill for a particular piece of legislation (i.e. healthcare legislation which will ensure every child has 21 healthcare insurance and compare it to the pending legislation.)
   - Execute the Teen Legislative Modules (Pages 26-29 of the Teen Leadership Guide)
   - Participate in the Youth Civic Program available within most communities where youth learn about community, local government politics and public service careers (contact your local county government center or kids voting coordinator)

5. Additional Resources for Youth & Voting include:
   a. The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement,
   b. Kids Voting USA,
   c. New Voters Project, and
   d. Rock the Vote (see Quick Reference). And remember It’s For the Kids...

C. Ten Easy Steps To A Successful Children’s Legislative Program

1. **FOCUS** your efforts on the organization’s goal to advocate and enact justice for all children.
2. **ORGANIZE** the members of your chapter by sharing information.
3. **RECRUIT** a committee that will assist you in planning and executing the activity.
4. **TIME, DATE AND PLACE** - schedule the event with the chapter’s program director.
5. **HEROS AND HEROINES** - reach out and invite community leaders to participate in the activity.
6. **ENGAGE CHILDREN AND YOUTH** in the planning process.
7. **KEEP** the local media informed and invite them to your event.
8. **INVITE** other chapters in your region to participate in the activity.
9. **DETERMINE TO KEEP DOING** the ongoing work of child advocacy.
10. **SHARE YOUR STORY** – Let your Regional Legislative Chair know about your good work. Send bulletins, articles and photos.
IX. VOTER REGISTRATION AND CENSUS DATA GATHERING

Voter Registration Drives sign up new voters or voters who are new to a state enabling them to vote in city, state and federal elections.

Census Data Gathering occurs every 10 years. The results of information collected is used to allocate government funding, also known as your tax paying dollars, for education, healthcare, veteran services, employment and housing.

A. WHY WE MUST HAVE AN ACTIVE ROLE IN VOTER REGISTRATION

1. All politics is local. Your local school board president may become your next town council member, your next mayor and then your next governor.

2. Every vote counts. Elections can be decided by just one vote!

3. Peer to Peer advocacy ensures higher participation resulting in legislation that better reflects the wants and needs of a community.

B. WHY WE MUST HAVE AN ACTIVE ROLE IN CENSUS GATHERING

1. Data collected during the census is used to determine the reapportionment and redistributing of representatives in a geographic area. In order to ensure equal representation is reflective of a community accurate data is needed.

2. Affordable housing numbers are determined based on the income of residents in an area. If all residents do not participate their data can’t be counted. This could skew for higher income numbers making housing rates higher than the actual income of current residents.

3. Accurate numerical data is necessary to determine the resources such as schools, law enforcement and health care facilities needed in a community.

C. PROGRAMMING THAT LEAVES A LASTING FOOTPRINT OF THE LEGISLATIVE WORK DONE BY OUR MOTHERS, TEENS, CHILDREN, FATHERS and ASSOCIATES.

1. VOTER REGISTRATION DRIVES

   • Planning Steps- Ensure your voter registration drive is before all deadlines to register for local and federal primaries. Springtime is optimal.
• Potential Partners - NAACP, Churches, Sororities, Fraternities and League of Women Voters.

• Outreach/Promotion Strategies - Use Jack and Jill of America Inc. hashtags such as #jjvotes

• Websites/Guides/Resources - EMPOWERING THE VOTERS OF TOMORROW By LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

• How to measure effectiveness - How many people did you register? How many likes did you get on social media? How many shared your social media post?

2. TAKE YOUR CHILDREN TO THE POLL

• Planning Steps - Discuss with your children the candidates running for office. Where do they stand in the issues important to you and your family and those set by the Jack and Jill of America Inc. of America, Inc. Research all ballot initiatives with your child. At the poll explain to your child all steps taken at the polling. If any election irregularities occur call Election Protection at 1-866-OUR-VOTE or 1-866 687-8683.

• Potential Partners – Surrounding area Jack and Jill of America Inc. Chapters, NAACP, Churches, Sororities, and Fraternities.

• Outreach/Promotion Strategies - Use Jack and Jill of America Inc. hashtags such as #jjvotes

• Websites/Guides/Resources - NAACP

• How to measure effectiveness – Poll your chapter to see how many voted as a family? For college students did the vote absentee? Did you discuss the ballot with them? Did they encourage their peers to vote? Capture all numbers.

• Everyone in the chapter can participate in voter registration at some level. With just one voter registration project per year, or multiple smaller projects, you support the entire legislative process, as it all begins with voting! Voter Registration Drives are also a great way to build social responsibility and public relations. There are many ways by which to facilitate a voter registration drive.

However, some general guidelines are:

a. Contact the local election office for your county or area and obtain information on registration deadlines, absentee ballots, polling locations, absentee polling locations.

b. Obtain information on the law.
c. The National Voter Registration Act requires states to implement procedures designed to facilitate voter registration in federal elections.

d. Set goals and target an area or population

e. Obtain approval. Some areas require advance notice of your volunteer plans

f. Select a method of registration (i.e. postcard, centralized, etc.)

g. Inquire about training on a voting machine, if one will be used in your area’s elections. Also, inquire about having one on site and/or brought to a location for voters to train on in advance of Election Day (Contact local election office)

h. Collaborate with a church or other group to maximize your efforts

i. Promote your voter registration drive or project (i.e. door to door,

j. News release, radio announcement, etc.). Remember to follow National Guidelines whenever contacting the press or promoting on behalf of Jack and Jill of America Inc. at any level. If you have questions contact the Jack and Jill of America, Inc. National Headquarters at: admin@jack-and-jill.org

k. Keep up with the paperwork, as you will want to report to the elections office, so keep names and contact information for those registered

l. Identify a politically knowledgeable member, or assign your legislative chair to keep abreast of new laws and developments within your state and county, especially around redistricting, new laws, deadlines, etc.

Note: Remember any voter registration activities must be conducted in such a manner that is non-partisan. You may not favor one candidate over another.

X. LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY WORKSHOP

A. Check with your regional legislative chair to obtain any current presentations and notify her of any legislators being contacted.

B. Form a planning committee with the involvement of your legislative chair (teens and mothers)

C. Develop possible topics such as:

1. Panel discussion on current critical issues facing your community (health care, education, etc.)

D. Forum on government with an emphasis on the national initiative
E. Panel discussion on the role of Jack and Jill of America Inc. and other organizations of like kind in legislation and what are we doing to make a difference?

F. “The Legislature, the Law and You” (this is especially good for teens)

G. “What's Happening Day” – a program designed to help the community understand a current issue, to anticipate public questions about the issues and to foster understanding of their legislative responsibility.

H. Dinner meeting with a legislator as the speaker.

I. Legislative workshop devoted solely to informing members and the community about governmental procedures, tips for grant-writing, health care screenings and booths, and/or other legislative programs and sessions throughout the day.

J. How to develop legislative partnerships with other organizations and/or legislators.

K. IV. Select a Format
   1. Speaker
   2. Panel Discussion
   3. Debate between two speakers
   4. Small workshops and/or discussion groups on various subjects led by speaker, facilitator and/or both
   5. Exhibitors

L. V. Decide Who to Invite (Attendees)
   1. The location, physical facilities and program will help to drive this decision
   2. Invite community members, current or potential partner organizations, Jack and Jill of America Inc. members, teens, churches, elected officials, etc.
   3. Based on your budget or sponsors, determine which audiovisual equipment is needed and what, if any, refreshments or food will be served.

X. XI. MODULE: LEGISLATIVE TEENS TAKE ACTION AND TAKE THE HILL MODULE

A. Objective: Legislative Advocacy is the third aim and objective of the Constitution and Bylaws of Jack and Jill of America Inc. of America. The goals of On The Hill Summit, in part, are to provide teens with a greater understanding of the legislative powers (National, State, Local) that affect their lives as well as
the legislative issues that impact African Americans. Teens will become empowered by actively engaging in the legislative process.

At the completion of this module, teens will be able to:

1. Describe how the legislative process defines their lives.
2. Identify key legislative positions, including local (county, city, school, church) that serve to represent them.
3. Research legislative issues that directly impact African-Americans.

B. Activities

1. Attend the Jack and Jill of America, Inc. On The Hill Summit
   a. Prior to attending the On The Hill Summit, Jack and Jill of America, Inc. teens should research and be able to answer the following questions:
      i. How does a bill become law?
      ii. Who can draft a bill?
      iii. What are the four basic types of legislation?
      iv. What is the role of a congressional committee in the passing of a bill?
      v. If a bill is advanced out of committee, what are the additional steps prior to it being signed by the President of the United States?

2. Actively participate in educational workshops on the legislative process and interact with elected/appointed officials of the Congress of the United States, which consists of Senate and House of Representatives.

3. Teens Take Action and Take The Hill
   a. Research legislation that is currently being considered and debated.
   b. Research the legislator’s personal background and career, their congressional committee membership, positions on issues and review their voting record.
   c. Meet with your legislative representative as his/her constituent during the On The Hill Summit.
   d. Tell them the reasons you support the bill you selected.
   e. Materials Needed
i. Access to the Internet or other reference sources.


iii. Script (see sample below): “Hello, I am _________ from ______________. I am a member of Jack and Jill of America Inc. of America, Inc. and in the _____ grade. H.B. _____ is about (summarize) _________________________________. As a teen, I support this bill for these two reasons _(state)_____. What is your position on this H.B.? [Be ready for responses and discussion] I hope you will act and _______[cast your vote or sign the letter that is circulating or endorse the bill as a co-sponsor]. If you need information on issues related to children and family, please contact Jack and Jill of America Inc. of America Headquarters. “Thank you for your time today.”

C. Module Evaluation

Teens that attend the On The Hill Summit will:

1. Demonstrate an ability to state how a bill is passed into law.

2. Communicate at least two reasons they support the House Bill they have chosen.

3. Be able to give a brief trip report to their chapter teen group or mothers about their experience at the On The Hill Summit.

IMPORTANT: Jack and Jill of America Inc. may endorse or oppose pending legislation and assume a stance on matters of public policy if so recommended by the National Legislative Committee and approved by the National Executive Board of Jack and Jill of America Inc.

XII. HOW TOs

A. HOW TO HOST A CANDIDATE/ISSUE FORUM IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

1. WHAT: What is a Forum?

   a. A forum is a public event in which candidates for public office answer questions from the audience or a moderator.

   b. The candidates may appear together or separately.

2. WHY: Why Conduct a Forum?

   a. Forums are important for educating the public about issues that are important to our organization and the public at large.
b. Forums can also educate candidates about issues that are critical to Jack and Jill of America Inc. of America, Incorporated (e.g., health care, public safety, etc.).

*Remember that Jack and Jill of America Inc. of America, Incorporated is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that is prohibited from conducting a partisan candidate forum.*

3. **HOW: How to Host a Forum.**

Here are the steps to hosting a successful forum!

**Step One:** Decide what type of content and structure you want to have for your event.

- Will it be a town hall? A panel discussion? A debate?
- Will there be time for questions from the audience?
- Will the target audience be youth or adults? Low voter turnout areas?

**Step Two:** Choose a moderator and candidates to invite to the forum.

- Decide if you would like someone from the community at large or a member of the organization.
- Decide which candidates you will invite to participate.

**Step Three:** Pick a date, time, and place!

- Determine whether or not there are any conflicting events that are already scheduled for the time you are considering.
- Follow the appropriate protocol in contacting candidates. (Call the campaign office and talk to the “scheduler” for the candidate’s events).
- Choose a location that is convenient and easily accessible to the public. (Example: a public library or school campus).

**Step Four:** Invite the candidates, moderator, and other participants

- Send formal invitations to the moderator, the candidates and any others who are participating in the forum.
- Confirm the date, time, and details of the event in writing with the candidate’s office. (Get an RSVP).
- Brief candidates before the event. Find out what their expectations and requests are prior to the forum.
Step Five: Recruit volunteers in advance of event

- Ask Jack and Jill of America Inc. moms, dads, teens, etc. to staff the forum.
- Determine assignments/tasks and “run of show”/day off details (set up, take down, etc.)

Step Six: Don’t forget the technology!

- Make sure you have technical support for the event, including AV equipment, etc.

Step Seven: Promote the Forum!

- Promote your forum via social media, newsletters, press, and television.
- Draft press advisories and releases in advance of the event.
- Consider who you would like to target as an audience for the forum and use the appropriate media to reach that audience.
- Consider adding a VOTER REGISTRATION opportunity at the event, if appropriate.

Step Eight: Host a Successful Jack and Jill of America Inc. Candidate Forum!

- Confirm attendance of participants.
- Confirm Jack and Jill of America Inc. Volunteers.
- Follow up with the media (press releases, etc.
- Arrive in advance of the event and make sure that everything is set up properly (tables, microphones, chairs, water, etc.).
- Greet the audience and candidates as they arrive.

Step Nine: Be Clear About the Rules of Engagement for the Event!

- Your audience should know the rules for Questions and Answers, time limits, and format of the program.
- Your audience should know that this is a non-partisan event, voter education initiative, etc.
- Encourage attendees to vote early or on Election Day!

Step Ten: Follow Up After Your Jack and Jill of America Inc. Forum.

- Send all participants a thank you note.
- Promote any photos or other significant moments from the event on Jack and Jill of America Inc. social media.
4. Suggested Formats for your Jack and Jill of America Inc. Candidate Forum

   a. Standard Forum: -An event that includes short opening remarks by the candidate, followed by audience Q/A, and then a closing speech by the candidate.

   b. Panel and moderator- An event that involves Q/A for a panel of candidates, asked by some moderator and/or members of the audience.

   c. Town hall meeting- Can be conducted jointly or separately for each candidate. Members of the audience ask questions and the candidate is given the opportunity to provide detailed answers.

     Debate- A forum in which candidates answer questions that are pre-drafted and then receive follow up questions from a moderator or from the audience.

B. HOW TO PLAN A DAY AT THE CAPITOL OR AT LOCAL GOVERNMENT?

One of the best ways to ensure that Jack and Jill of America, Inc. children understand and learn the legislative process is by experiencing a day at the state and local level. State - local level advocacy can yield significant results and elected leaders will take notice when a large number of our families and children visit them about a single issue.

1. What is an advocacy day?

   An opportunity for families and children to speak with one voice.

2. Why host an advocacy day?

   a. A well-organized advocacy day can help you achieve a few main goals such as:

   b. Building awareness and visibility about home visiting

   c. Demonstrating strong and widespread support

   d. Cultivating and strengthening relationships

   e. Educating members of the legislature about the benefits or consequences of pending legislation

   f. Energizing and educating your constituents

3. Is advocacy considered lobbying?

The short answer is NO. Lobbying is when you try to influence a legislator to take a specific action on a specific piece of legislation. Advocacy can be any activity that builds awareness and educates legislators without exerting influence for a legislator to vote a particular way. Here are a few examples of advocacy day activities that are NOT lobbying:

   a. Delivering materials to legislators about home visiting and discussing your community program
b. Discussing thematic policy issues such as access to quality early childhood education, health screenings and the need for increased public investment

c. Inviting members and staff to attend a briefing about a key topic or pending legislation to inform them about its impact or consequences

d. Inviting members to speak at a rally in support of home visiting or to speak at an information session about pending legislation

e. Inviting members to visit your program or join your Advisory Committee

f. Hosting an activity in the capitol rotunda that demonstrates your work

4. How to plan your advocacy day

Step 1: Know Your Capacity- The first step in planning an advocacy day is to determine your capacity to engage in a statewide advocacy activity.

- You may already have the infrastructure in place to begin planning.

- If you have concerns about your capacity to organize an advocacy day, take some time to determine what you need in order to implement a successful event. Things to consider may include: your volunteer and staff capacity, any funding needs, and your organization’s communication reach.

- At a minimum, you will need a set of committed individuals who can serve as your point people, a small amount of dedicated resources, and a few strong collaborative allies who can help you do the work and participate on the day of the event.

- If you determine that your capacity to build a support team is not feasible, consider a smaller-scale advocacy activity instead. For instance, host several mini-advocacy days at the capitol. Recruit a few program supervisors (by region) to attend meetings with legislators. Make visits at the capitol as a group and deliver materials to target legislators and their staff. After the event, have the program supervisor set up a site visit.

Step 2: Build a Committee In most states, planning an advocacy day means convening a planning group beginning in the summer before the spring state legislative season. Early on, recruit volunteers and leaders who can take on active roles in the preparation and implementation stages of your event. Look to your staff, community volunteers and advocates to join your team. Be clear about time commitments, duties and other deliverables. A formal or informal steering committee can help you get the job done.

Steering Committee
Who: A diverse group is helpful in establishing an effective structure and scope for statewide advocacy efforts. Recruit committee members from Chapter members across the state. The steering committee could also include a regional leadership.

Any individual that can participate in planning AND do the work is an appropriate member of the steering committee.

Tasks: Determine the goals, strategies and activities that will occur on advocacy day. These individuals could also serve as advocacy day leaders or be assigned to a specific subcommittee. Committee members should also serve as liaisons to their own network of members for participant recruitment.

_Avocacy Day Leaders Committee_

Who: Members of the steering committee. If a committee is large enough, subcommittees could tackle these tasks.

Tasks: Lead the day-of event and keep things moving. Coordinators might have a focus on: volunteers, material compilation and distribution, reservations and food, communication, social media, press, participant recruitment, and member visits.

_Avocacy Day Volunteers Committee_

Who: Volunteer Chapter members. Volunteers are interested in your advocacy day and can offer expertise and assist you in implementing your activities on the day of the event. Each volunteer should be assigned to a lead coordinator who can allocate specific jobs and duties around the day.

Tasks: Help set up, break down, distribute materials and lunch, serve as guides, conduct trainings, take photos etc.

**Step 3: Establish Your Goals and Develop Your Strategy**

Once you have your team set up, schedule a meeting to determine your advocacy day goals and develop your strategy. Example goals are:

- Gain media attention
- Show mass support/demonstrate influence in numbers
- Educate legislators about Jack and Jill of America Inc. of America, Inc.
- Encourage legislators to work in support of a policy initiative that expands and supports Jack and Jill of America Inc. of America, Inc. legislative agenda
• Inform elected officials of current issues that may impact children and families

• Educate and empower your constituents to engage in advocacy (advocacy workshops/ training)

Use the list of questions below to formulate an advocacy day strategy. The answers should be completed by the steering committee and put in writing for reference.

• With whom do you want to partner or collaborate?

• What are their contributions to your initiative?

• Who are the targets (legislators, a specific committee, legislative staff) that you want to influence to achieve your goal?

• What are the key upcoming events that might provide opportunities for mobilizing?

• What are the current legislative issues at hand?

• What are the specific activities that you will carry out?

Example Activity Descriptions:

Advocacy training: Train your advocacy day participants on effective advocacy tactics or bring in an expert to brief them on pending legislation that could impact children and families.

Plan legislator meetings: Organize a legislator meeting for every participant at advocacy day. Help with scheduling, provide talking points about a specific issue and produce a quality leave-behind letter or one-page document.

Resolutions: Ask one of your legislative champions to issue a resolution in their respective chamber and ask that it be read out loud while your participants watch from the gallery.

Floor statement: Ask a champion to issue a statement (in relation to pending legislation or about your program). Work with the legislator’s staff on writing the statement.

Meet with the legislators: Organize a meeting with the legislators. Invite a member of the press to observe the meeting and to write an article.

Social Media Campaign: Organize a Twitter campaign to coincide with your event.

Deliver a petition: During the year, ask supporters to sign a simple petition to the Governor or Legislators’ asking that they remember the importance of early learning as they draft the budget for your state. Use advocacy day as an opportunity to deliver the petitions to the Governor or Legislator’s office.

Rally: Order brightly colored t-shirts for all participants, hold a rally on the capitol steps and invite legislators to speak. Invite the press to observe and arrange a press interview with a few key stakeholders or a family to highlight your program’s impact in the community.
Organize a briefing for legislative staff: Invite lobbyist and legislative experts

**Step 4:** Carry Out the Work Once - you have identified the activities you want to carry out, stay on schedule with your tasks. Build a timeline and a checklist to help you follow through.

Materials that you need to include in your legislative day package:

- Legislative Day Planning Timeline
- Media Advisory
- Press Release
- Letter to Participant
- Program Agenda
- Participant Activity Checklist
- Social Media
- Tips for Meeting with Legislators
- Legislative Talking Points
- State Fact Sheet/Leave Behind
- Letter to Legislator
- Legislative Visit Report Form
- Thank You Letter
- Event Evaluation
- Map/Parking Instructions
- Legislator Name/Room Number List
- List of restaurants nearby

**Step 5: Evaluate and Follow - Up**

Measure your overall effort to determine whether your activities were effective by conducting a follow-up survey.

Use a free electronic survey tool such as Survey Monkey® to collect results.
Hold a steering committee debriefing meeting to review the survey results and ask the committee to reflect on how to improve your event for the next year.

Good reflection questions are:

- How well did the activities go?
- How could they have gone better?
- Did we achieve our intended outcome? Why or why not?
- What can we change next time to improve on the activity?
- Might we use a different activity to achieve a similar outcome?

5. Legislative Day Follow-Up

a. Send a thank you email to all event participants and the legislators who participated in your advocacy day.

b. Each participant should also be encouraged to send a personal thank you to the legislator or staff they visited.

c. Inform your families about your advocacy efforts with an article in your print or electronic newsletter.

d. The article could include information about the number of participants, the legislative offices visited, and photos from the event.

C. HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN MARCHES/RALLIES
The impact of participating in marches/rallies has long lasting effect. This is an ideal opportunity to children, teens, mothers, fathers and associates to join in unison to speak out against injustices our families face.

Prior to participation the NEB, Region or Chapter will consult on the desired outcome of taking part in the designated event. Chapters are to communicate their plans with their Regional Director and Regional Legislative Chair. Once approved a point person is to be designated. Communication to be sent to those invited to participate are to include the point person’s contact information for prep, day of and follow-up instructions, date of the event, meeting time, meeting location, route of the march, instructions on signage to be carried by attendees, listing of hashtags to be used when posting on social media, and a briefing on Jack and Jill of America, Inc.’s position on the matter.

D. HOW TO CONDUCT A LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE WEBINAR ON ISSUES?

An easy way to keep your Chapter and Legislative Committee engaged with public policy issues is by conducting webinars to help educate and raise awareness. Below are the steps to conduct a success webinar:

1. What is the topic or reason for the webinar?

2. What is the date and time of the webinar? Please remember those groups in a different time zone that might participate in your webinar, CST, EST, MDT and etc.

3. Decide what online webinar service or app, you’re going to use to help facilitate the webinar, i.e. Zoom, GoToMeeting™, Anymeeting and etc. You need to know how many people can participate at one time? Do you need a facilitator of the meeting? Who will present during the webinar? Who will make sure questions are being answered?

4. Once you decided on the webinar service or app, you need to schedule the webinar through the service and send it out to all the participants. So, you need to have ready everyone’s email address and input them into the invitation registration of the service. Once the webinar is scheduled, a link or email will go out to the listed participants providing the time, date and topic of the webinar along with sign-in instructions.

5. One you have scheduled your webinar through the service or app, you need create a flyer with the webinar link or registration information to send out to the participants or others to promote the event.

6. Next, you need to create the PowerPoint presentation that will be discussed during the webinar. How many slides will you use? Use lots of photos and as little text as possible… keep it interesting and fun… not too many words

7. Make sure each speaker presenting during the webinar is ready for their time to speak.
8. It’s recommend you host a webinar dry-run with all the speakers, presenters, facilitators and participants during the webinar to run through the webinar from start to finish. This will help with identifying any technical issues in advance and allow smooth transition between your speakers/presenters.

9. You will also need to determine how to handle questions during the webinar. Will you use the Q & A featured as a tool on most apps/services? Or will you answer questions as you go verbally or write them down and send responses later. This is critical because people can easily get you off topic or prolong the webinar entirely.

10. After the webinar, you can always send a recap or follow-up. This can be done easily because most webinar services or apps have a recording feature. This function allows you to record the entire webinar and send it out to everyone that missed participating.

E. HOW TO CONDUCT A LEGISLATIVE SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

Creating a social media campaign for your chapter can seem to be a daunting task but if you follow these easy steps, it doesn’t have to be. It is key to develop a strategy prior to launching one’s social media tactics. That way you have something to measure at the completion of your legislative social media campaign.

1. Gaining Key Input & Participation

Any successful social media campaign is built upon strong and committed volunteers.

It is important to get input from your National & Regional Legislative Committee as well as from the Chapter Legislative Committee. Plan to brainstorm at the beginning of the program year and gather input as to the potential legislative issues that will directly positively & negatively affect the mission of Jack & Jill of America (these may change during the program year so make sure someone is following them).

2. Communicate a Clear & Inspiring Message
Your social media campaign must be built on a clear-cut purpose that is easy to communicate, as well as inspiring to people. Think of ideas that are bold, heartfelt and have shown demonstrable success in positively affecting the lives of families.

3. Social Media Tactics That Will Generate Success

Identify a team of mother members, preteens and teens to work with the Legislative committee as Social Media champions. Having a diverse group will help to identify and execute a bold and successful program that clearly communicates its purpose and success, you are now ready to launch with your social media tactics.

4. Develop Engaging Content: The Key To Social Media Success – Most social media campaigns fail because committees do not realize that social media is simply communication channel, not the content of the communication itself. You have to forward something worthwhile. You need to tell, in many ways, compelling stories. This is the heart is social media success. It is crucial to feature photos of those touched with your campaign, videos of your social media campaign in action, and other vital content that will go viral and be worthy of sharing and re-sharing. Without great content curated and shared, your social media efforts will struggle.

5. Reminder to Make an Impact at Every Level of Government: Congress, State Legislatures, Local Municipalities, Regulations, etc.

6. Utilize Email As Your Backbone Channel – Email is now over 40 years old and is used by Baby Boomers and Generation X much more than social media. However, many of the Legislators like Email and SNAIL Mail, therefore, use both.

7. Educate and Mobilize Supporters – Create an educational post on your Facebook fan page to discuss the purpose of your social media campaign

Use Multiple Social Channels – Don’t just post on the legislators Facebook page, also look for Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat (not typically used by elected officials).

8. Have a Facebook Fan Page – This is simple to do and I am sure that you can procure a Mother Member or Teen to build one for you. This will allow you to have a place where people (especially elected officials) can follow all the good work you are doing as a Chapter and will help your message to them. Ensure that you post at least 2-3 times per month with interesting content. This will show proof that you are impacting the world and achieving your stated goals; making your messaging to the elected officials more relevant and timely.

9. Develop Your Own Unique #Hashtag For Your Campaign – When utilizing Twitter, Instagram, and now Facebook, promoting your own hashtag can be a key moniker for your social media campaign. Develop a hashtag that truly embodies the spirit and purpose of what you are trying to achieve. Hashtags can become a vital part of your branding, as well as those following your posts, and followers looking to connect with each other as a community. Remember to always use #jackandjillinc, #powertomakeadifference and the hashtag associated with the campaign.
• **ALWAYS Include A Call-To-Action** – Always ask people on social media channels and in your emails to “Please share” or “Please Retweet.”

• **Social Advocacy** – Plan on giving your chapter a basic message to use then they can add to it themselves. They will need to, Tweet an Official, Facebook and Official, Act on Regulation, Write a Letter, Sign a Petition, Make Phone Calls, Share a personal story and/or Register to Vote On-line

### Example of Social Media Plan & Follow-up

Queen City Jack & Jill of America, Inc. 80 Moms; 74 Dads; 149 Children

ACTIVITY: Send letters to Lawmakers supporting House Bill 13 to Save Teachers, Increase Per Pupil Funding to National Average in North Carolina.

PLAN: Use social media to build upon the letter writing campaign to each legislator represented by the Queen City Membership. Post pictures, comments, tweets to each elected legislators social media page, twitter account, snapchat and Instagram. Have members with Social Media accounts to share on their personal accounts as well. Also send handwritten letters by SNAIL Mail and by EMAIL. Channel(s): Email, Twitter, Facebook, SnapChat and Instagram. Hashtag: #nace, #qcjackandjill, #jackandjillinc and #HB13

Members who took action on the HB13 “letter-writing & social media” engagement were asked to share their posts, responses & likes to our private FB Queen City Group page as well as forward emails & any hand-written letters.

RESULTS: The social media engagement generated a total of 64 letters, emails, tweets, FB posts, to elected officials from Mother members, Dads & Children. These were sent to Republicans, Democrats & Independents. Of those members, 37 took additional action on Twitter, generating 87 tweets & retweets.

### 10. Social Media Engagement of Influencers/Elected Officials

Remember that your objective is not just to push a message, but to actually build relationships with your identified elected officials. Use the following guidelines to help you engage and build the advocacy relationships that will make your social media campaigns go viral and take on a life of their own.

a. Read, comment, and share their content. This will informally introduce your organization to them and let them know that you share a common passion or interest. It also shows that you are genuinely interested in a topic when you have something to contribute to the conversation. Give something before you can expect to ask for something in return.

b. Once you have 'introduced' yourself, customize your ask according to the individual influencer you are trying to partner with. Craft your 'pitch' or ask to be of the most value to the influencer and their following.
c. Stay connected and involved, continuously follow up and share content. **Grassroots advocacy** takes time, and social media is like a giant child that needs constant attention. Once your social media presence takes off, you need to tend to it and monitor it so that you are always monitoring the information that you are sharing and the manner in which your partners are sharing it on your behalf.

d. Carefully build and tend your partnerships. Be a resource to them, ask questions, get their feedback, and remember to say thank you!

Like a garden, you may need to do some weeding along the way. Developing Partnerships with elected officials is KEY! Partnerships will grow. Partnerships will wither. In time, you will know which to tend to, and which to remove from your blossoming efforts to influence **pending legislation**.

**F. HOW TO EXECUTE CALL TO ACTION**

A Call To Action is an instruction to the audience designed to provoke an immediate response, usually using an imperative verb such as "ACT NOW", "Call Your Representative" or "Vote No!" Words that urge the reader, listener, or viewer of the message to take an immediate action regarding an issue.

Call to Actions have been a very useful tool when advocating for change and/or to raise awareness around a particular issue. Below is the step by step to creating a call to action. We need to get everyone actively engaged in activism and advocacy. A call to action is a easy way to spark their interest and increase their involvement.

**STEP ONE:** You need a crisis or pressing issue that requires immediate attention or action by the community, i.e. a bad piece of legislation that might pass, if not stopped by the community, a company has a policy negatively impacting the community, and on Election Day, get out and vote.

**STEP TWO:** You need to create the Call to Action by shaping the reason why you need action and using passionate words to help move people to action once received. For Example: **People Died for Your Right to Vote...Vote or Die!** A call to action should be only a few paragraphs nothing to long and drawn out. What’s the message? What’s the Action? What’s the deadline?

**STEP THREE:** Once the Call to Action is created, who do you send it too? You must know your audience and have a way to get the message to them. Email? Social Media? Phone Calls? Text?

**STEP FOUR:** Send out your Call to Action using various communication medias.

**STEP FIVE:** Follow-up with your group by thanking them for taking action today. It is always good to let them know the results of their work. For example: We did it! The bill didn’t pass by 4 votes today!!
Jack and Jill of America, Inc. believes every child deserves a bright future. A child’s best chance for success in life — and for becoming an adult who fully contributes to our prosperity as a nation — is a healthy start from birth.

Having access to health care helps provide that healthy start — a fact that we hope our country’s leaders and decision makers bear in mind as they debate the future of the Affordable Care Act, Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program.

Research indisputably shows children’s health is the foundation of their physical, intellectual and emotional development. Healthy kids are more likely to attend school, be ready to learn and graduate from high school and college, while poor health in childhood can have lifelong consequences.

One area where we’ve celebrated progress is in children’s health — specifically, the steadily growing number of kids in this country who have health insurance. Over the past 20 years, the percentage of children without coverage dropped to 5%, from nearly 15%. Today, about 95% of American children have health insurance, a historic high. Since 2008 alone, the rate of uninsured children has fallen by 40% overall, improving across all racial and ethnic groups. The rate is as low as 2% in some states.

This progress didn’t happen of its own accord. It came about because of policies that have expanded access to health insurance for kids — and for their parents, who are more likely to enroll their children for coverage when they themselves have insurance. It came about because of the Children’s Health Insurance Program and expansions to Medicaid. Indeed, states that have expanded Medicaid in recent
years experienced almost twice the drop in their percentage of uninsured children compared to states that chose not to expand the program.

With all of these great strides forward, now is the time to protect the progress made and continue the push to ensure every child has access to health care. We cannot afford to cede ground when it comes to the well-being of our kids, for their health forecasts ours as a nation.

Having access to health care means raising healthier children. Children who are able to do better in school because they have the glasses they need. Children who received appropriate treatments because of early screenings and wellness checkups. Children whose families don't face financial ruin if they have a serious or chronic illness that requires regular medical care.

And healthier children mean a healthier and more prosperous country. The foundation we lay for our youngest today determines our success tomorrow. Today's young Americans — nearly 74 million lives that hold so much promise — are our next generation of parents, inventors, artists, soldiers and leaders, the very bedrock of our future.

As an organization dedicated to improving the lives of America’s children, Jack and Jill of America Inc. of America, Inc. recognizes the fundamental importance of health, and we and our partners remain committed to ensuring all of our country’s children have what they need to thrive, including guaranteed access to health care for them and their parents. We will continue supporting efforts that help move us toward that bright future for every child in America. And we call on our nation’s leaders and lawmakers to do the same by prioritizing the health of our nation’s kids as they make their decisions.

1. WHY WE MUST HAVE PLAY ACTIVE ROLE

a. Good healthcare is a child’s best chance at a successful life

b. Healthier children mean a healthier and more prosperous country

c. Access to healthcare is a human right

2. Getting Started

a. What is a community forum?

A community forum is an event open to the public, advocates, community partners, elected officials and their staff. Typically, a community forum includes a panel of experts who speak about a specific topic --- Healthcare, provide the current state of health and outline how the community can stay engaged.

It is a great forum for concerned advocates who want to learn more about an issue. It is also an excellent way to recruit activists. If you are hosting the event it lends name recognition and credibility among elected officials, the media and other stakeholders.
b. Why hold a Health Community Forum?
Community Forums can be a very effective way to raise awareness in your community and to get various stakeholders involved in a healthcare issue. It can provide an opportunity for activists to join forces, demand action on a set of issues, advocate for change and get local media attention.

c. What would our community forum look like?
Much of the event depends on the time and resources you have available to design and implement it. It can be as big or small as you want. In general, a community forum should last about an hour, long enough to educate your audience and short enough to keep their attention. For example, a suggested forum format would have:

1. three presenters, each speaking for 10–15 minutes;
2. a 20-minutes question and answer session;
3. a 5–10 minutes wrap-up session, which motivates attendees and relays concrete action steps.

d. Beginning to Plan
Find partners to work with. As a first step, try to identify a group of individuals who can help you plan the community forum. Organizing forums can be a lot of work and it helps to have partners who can help design and prepare the event. If you can't find others to work with, that's fine too.

e. Preliminary Questions
As you begin to plan your forum, there are some preliminary questions you need to answer. The answers to these questions may change as you talk to other organizations or as you work through specific details. That's okay — it's actually a good sign, because you want to be responsive to the needs of your partners and community.

- What is the most important thing you want to accomplish with this forum? Write this one down, because you will not want to forget it.

- Who can help, and how much time can each person commit? This should be a positive experience. Be realistic about the commitment each person is able to make so that the rest of the planning can go smoothly.

- Who can you collaborate with in the community? You probably do not have all the knowledge and resources to do everything yourself. There are already groups and advocates in your community who care about these issues and would want to be involved in this kind of event.
● What type of budget and resources do you have? You will need to know this before you secure a location, print handouts, plan refreshments, etc.

● Ideally, what would your forum look like? Spend some time dreaming up a forum that makes you happy and proud. What aspects or elements are most important to you?

f. Thinking about the Logistics.

As with any event, it is hard to anticipate all logistical matters, but the more planning you do, the more smoothly the event will go. Use the following questions to help you brainstorm resources that are available and put your thoughts together for the event:

● When, where and at what time will the forum occur?
● How long should it last?
● How many people will speak and who should they be?
● Who will moderate?
● Will there be a sponsor for the event?
● How will we publicize the event?
● What will the room set up be?
● Will we need microphones or audio-visual equipment?
● Who can we collaborate with for this event?
● How will we notify the media about the event?
● How do we integrate a social media component if any?
● Should we serve refreshments?

g. Assigning Tasks

Because there is a lot to do to make a community forum successful, planning the event at least eight to 10 weeks in advance is helpful. Below is a suggestion of how to divide the tasks.

You may expand, contract, mix and match these fields of responsibility to match the size and personal interests in your team.

One person may take on several of these roles, or many people may split them up. The important thing is that all of these responsibilities are fulfilled and that there is one- point person overseeing the entire project. If you are organizing a community forum on your own, read through this section to help inform your thinking.
**Team Leader Responsibilities:** Keep the big picture in mind. Keep track of everyone’s progress. Support each team member with their responsibilities when they need help. Manage budget.

**Program Coordinator Responsibilities:** Organize the actual program for the forum. Coordinate the agenda. Network with local organizations and advocates to find good speakers. Moderate the panel during the forum and help move the program along smoothly.

**Site Organizer Responsibilities:** Reserve the site and coordinate all the physical aspects of the event. Coordinate the banners, chairs, tables, handouts, sign in table, sound system, refreshments, etc.

**Media Coordinator Responsibilities:** Invite the media. Contact local newspapers and television and radio stations. Follow up with them in the days and weeks leading up to the event. Write a press release. During the forum, be available to greet media professionals and provide them with materials. Consider a social media component.

**Publicity Coordinator Responsibilities:** Build public awareness and “fill the room” for the forum. Invite people to the forum through public announcements and advertisements and in one-on-one contacts. Invite congressional representatives and local policymakers.

**h. Planning the Event**

The Importance of Communication. Even if everyone is doing phenomenal work, planning a forum can be challenging if communication is not consistent. Regular phone calls and email updates can help lend to a successful event. Make sure that you have a system of communication worked out between teammates and keep your team leader updated on all progress so that they can be ready to troubleshoot any issues that emerge.

**i. Setting a Date**

Ideally, the community forum will take place when the issue you want to discuss is topical and relevant. This toolkit lays out a planning and preparation timeline of 5 to 6 weeks, but your team may choose to spend more or less time planning. Identify a space of days to aim for and be prepared to adjust that date as you talk with your partner organizations, speakers, and the site.

Finding a location. The location for your event will set the tone. Here are some things to consider when selecting a venue:

- Will this place naturally draw an audience?
- Will there be any fee to use this space?
- What kind of atmosphere will best suit the forum you are planning? Are you looking for a small room, a large auditorium, a park, or the steps of your Parliament?
• Will the guests and the audience feel comfortable in the space? (For example, some people may not feel comfortable in a church building; others may need it to be handicap accessible, etc.)

• Is this a site that will be attractive to the media? (Is it easy to get to? Does it lend itself to good pictures?)

• Is the site accessible by public transportation? Is parking easily available?

j. Possible Locations:

• Community College or University
• Library
• Community Center
• Community Organization Meeting Room
• School
• Church, Synagogue, Temple or Mosque
• Town Square or Public Amphitheater
• City or State Government Building
• Non-Profit Organization, like the YWCA

k. Connecting with Community Partners

Partnering with community organizations that are interested in your issue will enhance the success of your forum. Community partners can lend help and support in drafting and distributing materials, media outreach, and community attendance at the forum. Make a list of potential individuals and organizations you could partner with for the forum.

l. Calling potential partners:

1. Ask to speak with the director or appropriate staff person.

2. Introduce yourself.

3. Ask if he or she has a moment to talk about potential community forum you are planning

4. Ask if their organization would be interested in participating or if they can refer you to other interested parties or speakers.

5. Set a plan to follow up — be sure to get all contact information.
6. Thank them.
7. Record contact information and follow up with referrals

m. Setting the Agenda

Now it is time to plan the format of your forum. This sample agenda below should help you do this. The tone of the forum should be upbeat but serious and it should end positively, looking forward to future action.

- Welcome (5 minutes) Given by one of the organizers, local advocate or celebrity, probably the person who will act as moderator for the rest of the event.
- Introduction (10 minutes) An overview of the issue to be discussed at the forum.
- Opening Remarks (10 minutes) Given by a high profile person if you are able to secure someone.
- Panel (10 minutes per speaker): Moderator facilitates 3–4 panelists speaking about their experiences with the issue at hand.
- Question and Answer (15–20 minutes): Panel and other speakers take questions from the audience.
- Call to action (10 minutes): Moderator or local advocate suggests next step for audience, ideally something that can be begun in the room at that moment.
- Positive End (2 minutes) Make sure that the close of the forum is positive and leads to the next action. Give a rousing closing and send people off prepared to fight another battle, whether it be on this issue or the next.
- Selecting Speakers. You will most likely want 2–4 speakers presenting at your forum, representing a variety of perspectives.

n. Things to think about when selecting speakers:

Look for articulate and engaging people.

Think about assembling speakers who reflect the full diversity of culture, experience, and perspective in your community.

Seek a balance between relying on the strengths of experienced advocates and offering the forum as an opportunity to emerging advocates.

Be sure all the speakers know about each other and are comfortable speaking together with respect.
o. Preparing Speakers.

- Once you have selected and invited speakers and they have accepted your invitations, make sure they understand the set-up and goals of your forum. To help them prepare and to make sure your event is a success, consider doing the following things.
- Send the speakers information about you and your take on the issue at hand.
- Clearly explain the set-up of the forum and your desired outcomes.
- Go over the set-up of the event and let them know who will be presenting on the panel with them.
- Be clear about what time the event will start, how long they will have to present and who you hope to have in the audience.
- Follow up with them in the days following the event to reconfirm their availability.
- A conference call with the speakers before the event is always helpful to cover logistics, topics covered and share any new information in advance of the forum.

p. Action Items For Consideration

Set up a letter-writing table and encourage everyone to write a letter to their elected official — be sure to provide a simple sample letter.

Make a huge banner in which everyone can write their hopes for your issue and give it to elected officials. Be creative with visuals.

Provide sign-up sheets for participation in coming activities, perhaps sponsored by your partner organizations.

Circulate a petition to send to your elected officials, local or national.

Organize a call-in day to your elected official.

Recruit members for a community coalition to work together.

q. Post-Event Evaluation

There are two ways to evaluate the success of the forum.

First, distribute evaluation forms to forum participants at the close of the community forum and get a better understanding of what they learned and what could be improved.
Second, after the event is over meet with your core team to debrief. Go through the following questions to see what team members saw as successful aspects of the event and what areas could be improved for your next community forum.

- How did the location work out? Was it able to accommodate your needs?
- How successful was the publicity plan?
- What are ways you could get even more people to attend your next event?
- After checking the sign-in sheets against the list of people who said they would come, did individuals and other organizations produce the people they were committed to bring?
- Did people come off the street in response to leaflets, posters or advance media coverage? What was the speaker panel like?
- Would you use the same speakers again?
- Were there any logistical problems that occurred?
- How could they be avoided in the future?
- Was it covered by local media?
- Were tangible next action steps included?

r. Publicity and Media

Getting Turnout at Your Event. Your event will have the greatest impact if a large number of people attend. It is a good idea to have a plan on how you will get people to your event so that you do not spend a significant amount of time putting together an event and only have a small group of people attend. Keep in mind that the best strategy to get people to attend is to personally invite them.

- Possible ways to increase turnout at your event:
- Send a flyer about the event to your relevant email lists. Make a list of the friends and family you will personally invite.
- Submit announcements to your local papers for events calendars.
- Hand out flyers at community events.
- Place flyers on bulletin boards at community centers, religious institutions, in coffee shops, music stores, local schools and universities — anywhere there are people.
- Ask local newspapers and radio, and/or television stations to run public service announcements about the forum.
• Send invitation letters to all community organizations, groups, businesses, and individuals you want in attendance at the forum.

• If you will be having elected officials in attendance or a local celebrity giving the opening remarks, hype it!

• Invite Elected Officials and Local Policy Makers. Inviting elected officials and local policy makers to your event is a great opportunity for them to spend time with constituents and hear their concerns.

• Send e-mail and make a call to their office inviting them to attend your community forum.

• Explain what issue you will be discussing, why it is relevant to them, and why it is an important topic for their constituents.

• Note the date, time and location.

• Explain that he or she will offer part of the opening remarks (giving them a chance to express goodwill and concern for the community and the other speakers) and may choose to participate in the question and answer period.

• Inform him or her that you will be inviting the media to attend and ask about their availability to take questions from the media.

• A week after you have sent an invite request, follow up with a phone call to their office scheduler.

• Once they have accepted your invitation review the details of the event.

• Confirm the date, time and location.

• Explain the set-up of the event and who will be present.

• Discuss what you would like them to say at the event and when they will speak.

• Offer to send them talking points.

• A few days before the event, reconfirm their availability to attend.

s. Putting Together a Press Plan

You can do as many or as few of the following suggestions, based on the amount of time you have to put into getting media attention. Although it is up to you, keep in mind that the more media attention you get, the greater impact your forum will have.

• Try to get advance media coverage. Send a media advisory to key media contacts a week before the meeting.
● Consider inviting area college media classes to videotape your event.

● Make follow-up calls to media people, city desks, daybooks, and assignment editors a day or two before the meeting.

● Prepare a press packet for distribution to press people at the meeting. It should include a press release and background information on your issue and your organization.

● Prepare visuals. Both newspapers and television prefer taking interesting pictures rather than pictures of talking heads. Prepare some visuals, charts, banners, or stunts that you think might be interesting. The visual should not just be "catchy" but should convey your message.

● Talk with reporters and bloggers at the event. One person should be assigned as the spokesperson and to greet the press.

● Call the press people who did not come and tell them what happened or send a follow-up press release if you do not expect to get much media coverage.

● Thank the press people for covering your event

● If you received inaccurate coverage, call the media contact to clarify your message.

● If the event was a success but media professionals were not present, publicize the results yourselves.

**XIV. Glossary of Terms Used**

**A. Appropriation:** Provision of law that provides authority for Federal agencies to obligate funds and to make payments out of the Treasury for specified purposes. Appropriations for the federal government are provided both in annual appropriations acts and in permanent provisions of law.

**B. Companion Bill:** A bill introduced in one chamber of Congress that is similar or identical to a bill introduced in the other chamber of Congress.

**C. Concurrent Resolutions:** A legislative measure, designated “H. Con. Res.” or “S. Con. Res.” and numbered consecutively upon introduction, generally employed to address the sentiments of both chambers, to deal with issues or matters affecting both chambers, such as a concurrent budget resolution, or to create a temporary joint committee. Concurrent resolutions are not submitted to the President and thus do not have the force of law.

**D. Corrections Calendar (House of Representatives):** This calendar deals with bills that are controversial, typically bipartisan and passed without debate. This calendar was established to
“address specific problems with federal rules, regulations, or court decisions that bipartisan and narrowly targeted bills could expeditiously correct.” Bills are placed on this calendar by the Speaker of the House in consultation with the Minority Leader.

E. Discharge Calendar (House of Representatives): This calendar deals with motions to discharge committees from considering public bills or resolutions. Any member may make a motion to discharge. The motion is only considered once a majority of members (218) have signed it in agreement. If the motion is passed, the bill or resolution may move immediately from the committee to full House for a vote. If the motion fails, the bill or resolution is referred to the proper legislative calendar for later consideration by the full House.

F. Hearing: A meeting of a committee or subcommittee, generally open to the public, to take testimony, gather information and opinions on proposed legislation, or review the operation or other aspects of a Federal agency or program.

G. House Calendar (House of Representatives): This calendar deals with public bills that do not raise revenue, affect taxes or appropriate any money or property.

H. Mark-up: The process by which committees/subcommittees debate, amend, and rewrite proposed legislation.

I. Joint Resolutions: A legislative measure, designated “H. J. Res.” or “S. J. Res.,” that requires approval from 25 both chambers and is submitted to the President to be signed. Some joint resolutions are used to propose constitutional amendments. These types require a two-thirds affirmative vote by each chamber but are not submitted to the President; they become effective when ratified by three-quarters of the States.

J. Private Calendar (House of Representatives): This calendar deals with private bills and private resolutions. Bills and resolutions placed on this calendar are studied by six official objectors—three from the majority side and three from the minority side. The objector’s role is to ensure that bills and resolutions on the calendar deserve to be there and to prevent any “non-meritorious” bills and resolutions from being passed without debate. Rejected bills and resolutions are recommitted to their originating committee.

K. Quorum: The number of Senators/Representatives that must be present for the chamber to do business. The Constitution declares that a majority of each chamber establishes a quorum—51 members in the Senate and 218 members in the House. Additionally, the Constitution authorizes a smaller numbers of members to compel absent legislators to attend the session.

L. Ratification: Two definitions are: (1) the act of approval of a proposed constitutional amendment by the legislatures of the States; and (2) the Senate process of advice and consent to treaties negotiated by the President.

M. Simple Resolutions: Designated “H. Res.” or “S. Res.,” simple resolutions are used to express non-binding positions of the House/Senate or to deal with the House/Senate’s internal affairs, such
as the creation of a special committee. They do not require action by the other chamber or the President.

N. Union Calendar (House of Representatives): This calendar deals with bills that raise revenues, affect taxes or appropriate money or property. This is the most widely used calendar with the majority of reported public bills and resolutions placed on it for debate.

O. Veto: The procedure established under the Constitution by which the President refuses to approve a bill or joint resolution and thus prevents its enactment into law. A regular veto occurs when the President returns the legislation to the chamber in which it originated. The President usually returns a vetoed bill with a message indicating his reasons for rejecting the measure. The veto can be overridden by a two-thirds majority vote in both chambers.

P. Whip - The role of the Whip can be traced back to the United Kingdom’s Parliament which adopted the term Whip from the fox-hunting position, “whipperin,” or the person who kept the fox hounds focused on their mission. In Congress, the Majority Whip’s job is to count votes and “whip” up support for Democratic legislation and keep members focused on the mission. (Currently, the Majority Whip is the 3rd ranking position in the House of Representatives).
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