

The right (and the obligation!) to advocate is a bedrock value in American democracy. Artists, arts organizations, contributors and audiences all are stakeholders in decisions that are made about public policy. This edition of *The Practical Advocate* offers guidance on how you, as an arts advocate, can use your voice and your passion for the arts to maximum effect.

Where Do I Start?

The best way to begin advocating is to **introduce yourself to your federal and state elected officials**. Lawmakers need to hear what constituents think, so establish contact (via phone, letter or e-mail) and convey that the arts are important to your community. [Three Simple Ways to Advocate for the Arts](#) provides how-to tips.

Make the positive impact of your work visible to the public and elected officials. Are you giving prominent credit for any public funding you receive? Have you put your work on the map by submitting a story to the [United States of Arts](#) website? Do your social media channels emphasize how your programs benefit participants? Get busy and tell your story!

Get connected so you'll know when key votes or actions are pending. Plug in to your [state arts agency](#)'s mailing list and social media channels and become a member of your state's citizen advocacy organization.

Do...

- **Share the facts.** Empower your case with research on the impact of government arts funding.
- **Be creative.** More than most advocates, the arts community has the skills to humanize policy issues and help people understand the importance of our cause.
- **Be positive.** It's more effective to start advocating *for* an issue rather than against a position. When there is a specific bill that requires action, you can express opposition to or support for that legislation.

Don't...

- **Don't vilify.** Attacking anyone's political, social or religious beliefs will not convert them to your point of view or make them feel proud to support your cause. Cultivating "pan-partisan" support is the best way to grow public funding for the arts.
- **Don't allow yourself to be baited.** Check with a reliable source (like your [state arts agency](#)) to learn the facts if you hear an alarming story.
- **Don't get discouraged.** Your voice matters! There is nothing that captures the attention of an elected official more than contact from a local constituent. Use that power strategically.



Cite the Evidence

[Five Essential Arts Arguments](#)

[Fact vs. Fiction: Government Arts Funding](#)

[Why Should Government Support the Arts?](#)