



Let's
Advocate!

2016
Advocacy
Trainings &
Events

MINNESOTA
COUNCIL OF
NONPROFITS

Your Voice Makes a Difference

Rinal Ray
Minnesota Council of Nonprofits

Today's Learning Objectives



Let's Advocate!

2016
Advocacy
Trainings &
Events

MINNESOTA
COUNCIL OF
NONPROFITS

1. Understand the role of nonprofits in advocacy
2. Nonprofits can do advocacy and lobby
3. Learn what you can do as a resident, in your private life.

Introductions

Let's
Advocate!

2016
Advocacy
Trainings &
Events

1. Name
2. Organization
3. Burning Questions?

MINNESOTA
COUNCIL OF
NONPROFITS

Let's Advocate!

2016
Advocacy
Trainings &
Events

MINNESOTA
COUNCIL OF
NONPROFITS

Nonprofits and Advocacy

Advocacy, defined

Let's
Advocate!

2016
Advocacy
Trainings &
Events

MINNESOTA
COUNCIL OF
NONPROFITS

Advocacy is a broad range of strategies, which could include lobbying, to advance a cause.

- grassroots organizing, communications tactics, issue analysis, issue briefs, monitoring, media, etc.
- All advocacy activities are allowed, only lobbying has limits and reporting requirements

Avenues for 501(c)(3) Advocacy

Let's Advocate!

2016
Advocacy
Trainings &
Events

MINNESOTA
COUNCIL OF
NONPROFITS

Educate Public	Nonpartisan Voter Education	Organize Communities	Lobbying Exceptions
PARTISAN POLITICAL ACTIVITY	Regulatory Efforts	Educate Legislators	Educational Conferences
Raise Awareness	Encourage Voting	LOBBYING	Research
	Skills Training	Change Corporate Behavior	

Adapted from Alliance for Justice's
Lobbying with Confidence

Why do nonprofits avoid lobbying?

Let's Advocate!

2016
Advocacy
Trainings &
Events

MINNESOTA
COUNCIL OF
NONPROFITS

- Misunderstanding of the law
- Concern that it is inappropriate
- Lack of process to develop positions on issues

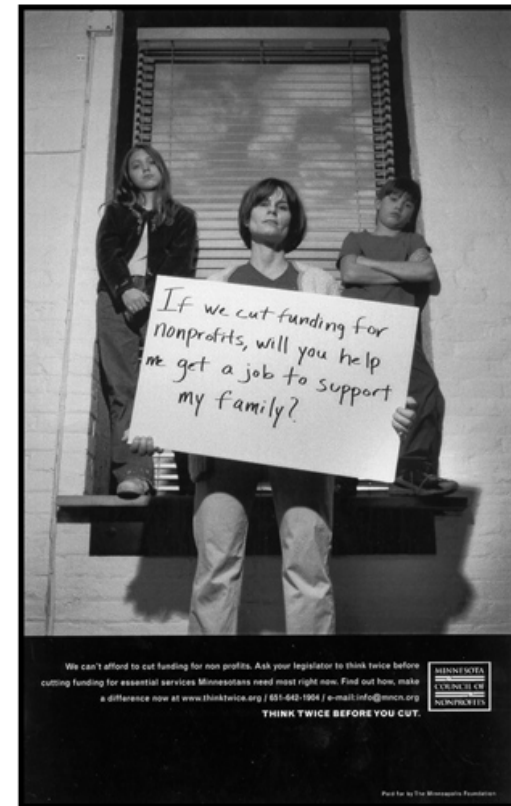
Why Nonprofits Lobby

Let's
Advocate!

2016
Advocacy
Trainings &
Events

MINNESOTA
COUNCIL OF
NONPROFITS

- Lobbying brings the voice of your organization and its constituents to the policy making dialogue
- Good things (and bad things) that happen in policy making are influenced by lobbying
- Legislators need public input to develop ideas into good public policy



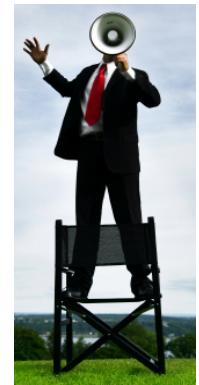
What is lobbying?

Let's
Advocate!

2016
Advocacy
Trainings &
Events

MINNESOTA
COUNCIL OF
NONPROFITS

- Lobbying is an attempt to influence specific legislation, it can be direct or grassroots.
 - Direct Lobbying** is communication directly with a legislator or policy maker in which a view is expressed on specific legislation
 - Grassroots lobbying** is communication with the general public in which a view is expressed and the public is called to action to contact or influence policy makers



What is NOT lobbying?

Let's
Advocate!

2016
Advocacy
Trainings &
Events

MINNESOTA
COUNCIL OF
NONPROFITS

- Communications on proposed regulations or administrative rulemaking
- Communications with members
- Technical advice
- Self-defense
- Non-partisan analysis or research
- Discussion of broad policy issues – social, economic, or other

Lobbying or Not?

Let's
Advocate!

2016
Advocacy
Trainings &
Events

Urging state legislators to pass a law to increase tax credits for energy efficient building upgrades.

Direct Lobbying.

MINNESOTA
COUNCIL OF
NONPROFITS

Lobbying or Not?

Let's
Advocate!

2016
Advocacy
Trainings &
Events

Educating legislators about public opinion on climate change and the need for governmental action (with no proposed or pending legislation).

Not Lobbying.

MINNESOTA
COUNCIL OF
NONPROFITS

Lobbying or Not?

Let's
Advocate!

2016
Advocacy
Trainings &
Events

Urging constituents to contact their legislators to vote against a bill through newspaper and radio ads.

Grassroots Lobbying.

MINNESOTA
COUNCIL OF
NONPROFITS

The Rules that Govern Lobbying

Let's
Advocate!

2016
Advocacy
Trainings &
Events

- There are **Rules** that govern – federal and state
- There are **limits** on lobbying activity or expenditure for public charities
- There are **reporting** requirements – federal 990 Schedule C and state reporting
- **Register** as a lobbyist if you surpass the threshold

MINNESOTA
COUNCIL OF
NONPROFITS

Nonprofits in an Election Year

Let's
Advocate!

2016
Advocacy
Trainings &
Events

MINNESOTA
COUNCIL OF
NONPROFITS

A 501(c)(3) organization may not support or oppose, either explicitly or implicitly, a candidate or party for public office. Nonprofits cannot electioneer -- attempt to influence the outcome of an elections.

BUT nonprofits can and should engage their communities in voting and the election!

- Wide gaps in who votes undermine our missions and goals
- Voting benefits the people who participate
- Voter engagement invites nonprofit members, clients, community members to take part in a positive and important process.
- Voters are your power base for advocacy!

Staying Nonpartisan in the Nonprofit Workplace

Let's
Advocate!

2016
Advocacy
Trainings &
Events

MINNESOTA
COUNCIL OF
NONPROFITS

- Individuals acting in their own capacity can engage in electoral activity
- Must be off the clock or on personal leave
- Organization cannot ratify individual acts expressly or by implication



Nonprofit Voter Engagement

Let's
Advocate!

2016
Advocacy
Trainings &
Events

MINNESOTA
COUNCIL OF
NONPROFITS

- Voter Registration
- Voter Education
- Voter Mobilization



Let's
Advocate!

2016
Advocacy
Trainings &
Events

MINNESOTA
COUNCIL OF
NONPROFITS

What can you do? As a Nonprofit Leader or Citizen Advocate

Nonprofit Advocate

Let's
Advocate!

2016
Advocacy
Trainings &
Events

- Engage Voters
- Build relationships
- Know who represents your organization – invite them to tour your office and learn about your program, meet participants
- Join a coalition
- Share with you elected officials the things you care about as an organization
- Show up
 - Legislative days of action
 - Committee hearings
 - Town halls

MINNESOTA
COUNCIL OF
NONPROFITS

Citizen Advocacy



Let's
Advocate!

2016
Advocacy
Trainings &
Events

MINNESOTA
COUNCIL OF
NONPROFITS

- VOTE!
- Know who represents you
- Share with you elected officials the things you care about
- Participate in the conversations – online and in person
- Show up
 - Session Line Up
 - Legislative days of action
 - Committee hearings

For Additional Questions, Comment, Feedback

Let's
Advocate!

2016
Advocacy
Trainings &
Events

**Rinal Ray, deputy public policy
director**

rray@minnesotanonprofits.org

651-757-3072

MINNESOTA
COUNCIL OF
NONPROFITS