



State Legislature Advocate Toolkit



Table of Contents

Introduction to this Toolkit	3
Managing your Relationship with State Legislators	
• Letters – Hand written and mass letters	4
• Calling your legislators	6
• Set up a meeting	7
Attending the Session	
• Tracking the Session	11
• Advocate Resources	12



Introduction: Advocating to the State Legislature Toolkit

This toolkit will help you reach out to your state legislators to educate them on the importance of arts and arts education in Arizona.

Elected officials from all levels of government repeatedly stress how important it is that they and their staffs receive information about the need to pass legislation, funding and more. During this economic crisis we must work harder than ever to secure funding for arts and arts education in Arizona. Your state legislators need to hear from you.

Speaking with elected officials to educate them on a particular issue or to impact their views on policy decisions that affect the lives of the people they represent is a right and responsibility of people in a democracy. We all have the power to affect change in our government.

This toolkit is focused on state legislators in Arizona. We hope that the information within will help you use your voice and advocate for the arts and arts education in Arizona.

5 Steps to Effective Advocacy

1. Educate yourself
2. Educate your elected officials/Meet your elected officials
3. Write, call and keep in touch
4. Actively participate as a constituent
5. Repeat



Managing your Relationship with State Legislators

Writing a Letter to Elected Officials

Why write a letter?

Writing letters to your elected officials can be extremely effective. If you can, take the time to hand write a letter – it will stand out from the faxes, mass emails and mass letters.

How do I find contact information?

There are several resources to use to find your elected officials information:

Arizona Citizens for the Arts Legislative Action Center:

<http://capwiz.com/artsusa/az/home/>

Arizona State Legislature-

<http://www.azleg.gov/alisStaticPages/HowToContactMember.asp>

Tips for a Successful Letter

- A short, direct and polite letter is most effective. Elected officials have little time; they need to hear your message in a direct and concise way.
- Handwritten letters are very effective, as long as the handwriting is neat and legible.
- Be polite; don't be too aggressive.
- Request a response.
- Include your name, address, and ways to contact you (phone number, email) on the letter AND the envelope.
- Be specific with your concerns and requests. If you're writing about a specific bill, give them the bill number and tell them how you would like them to vote.
- Keep in mind that facts carry a lot more weight than reasons such as "because it's bad" or "because I like it." So include some compelling facts about arts education.
- Thank them for their time and acting on your behalf.
- Address them with respect and use proper etiquette



Sample Letter

The Honorable [Insert Name]

[Insert Address]

RE: Arts in Arizona

Dear Senator [Insert Last Name],

I am a resident of ____, and I am writing as a citizen who is concerned about our state's arts industry.

I understand firsthand the importance of access to arts for all Arizonans. The arts are an essential part of the fabric of Arizona as an economic industry, the key to an innovative future and a key to our cultural past. I also know firsthand that access to art has shaped the lives of my family.

Recent research has demonstrated the significant economic impact of the arts industry in Arizona. Almost 50,000 people are employed in the arts industry in Arizona. In these challenging economic times, 50,000 working Arizonans make a significant impact on the economic health of our state.

The arts are a necessary part of Arizona's economic recovery and a vital part of Arizona's future. I know that the arts are an important part of my family and our state.

Thank you for considering this matter. I hope I can count on your support for arts in Arizona.

Sincerely,
(your handwritten signature)
Betsey Lopez

CC: [insert name], [your title]



Calling Your Elected Officials

Calling your state legislator can be an effective way of letting her or him know that constituents are concerned about a particular issue. You may speak with a person or get voice mail. When you call:

- State who you are, including your name, that you are a constituent of that person’s district or state, and any other appropriate information
- Name the issue you are calling about (including the bill number or name of the legislation, if applicable), your position on it (are you for or against the proposed legislation), and a sentence or two only about why you have taken that position.
- State clearly what you wish your representative to do (for example, vote for or against a piece of legislation)
- Close by repeating your name and, if they ask for it, giving your address and phone number in case the office wishes to follow up with you
- Remember to be polite, clear and brief. It may help to write out what you plan to say ahead of time

Sample Phone Message

Good afternoon, my name is *[Your Name]* and I’m a member of *[Club, Organization, etc]*. I am calling to urge Senator McComish to support the arts in Arizona by voting for *[Bill Number and Title]*. In our state, everyone person should have equal access to the arts. The arts are essential to Arizona’s economy. I hope that he will vote for this bill. Again, this is *[Your Name]*. My address is 123 Main Street, Phoenix, AZ, 85003 and my telephone number is 602-555-3210. Thank you for your time.

Phone Etiquette

Keep in mind, when calling elected officials you will likely speak with their staff. Keep in mind the following, when speaking with staff and elected officials.

- Be polite
- Be concise
- Speak clearly and at a reasonable and understandable pace
- Clearly state that you are a voting constituent in the officials district
- Thank them for their time
- Leave contact information



Meeting with your State Senators and Representatives

Why meet with your state legislators? An in person meeting with state legislators is just the first step in building a repore with your state legislators. If the people, who represent you, know and respect you, they are more likely to be open to your ideas and opinions.

Organize a small team of people to go visit an elected official

Try to bring a small group of two to four people with you on your visit. When assembling a “team” of constituents, try for diverse representation; people from all walks of life. Diverse groups bring added perspectives, skills and presence that a homogeneous group cannot.

Some possible team members to include in your visit:

- Parents
- Educators
- Administrators and arts professionals
- Business leaders
- Community members
- Artists

Setting Up a Meeting with Your Elected Officials

Send a letter, an email or fax requesting a meeting with preferably one month’s notice.

Sample Letter/Email/Fax

Date

Attn: (Name of Scheduler, if known)

The Honorable/Dr./Mr./Mrs. (Name)

[Use local address]

FAX

Ms./Mr. (Name of scheduler):

I am writing to request an appointment for several constituents and I to speak with Senator/Representative [Name] to discuss the arts in Arizona and the need to preserve public support of the arts in Arizona.

We are requesting a meeting in [month]; my preference would be for [day of the week], [month, day and year], but we can certainly be flexible for the Senator/Representative’s schedule.

Those in attendance at the meeting, depending on when it is scheduled for, will be:

- Name, title and address for each attendee
- Name, title and address for each attendee

Please let me know when the Senator/Representative might be available. I will follow up with you in a few days if I have not heard back.

Thank you,

(Your name)

(Your address)

(Your Telephone Number)

(E-mail address)



If you do not hear from them, follow up by phone. You may need to be persistent in following-up until an actual meeting is confirmed. They are usually not trying to avoid you—they are simply overwhelmed with requests for meetings in an already packed schedule, so keep trying. If you speak to a scheduler, be sure to get her or his name in case you need to call back. Be persistent—it will pay off.

Preparing for Your Meeting

Practice makes perfect. Gather your team in advance, if at all possible, so that you can share information and agree upon strategies for your meeting. Agree on the focus of your meeting with your elected official, how you will introduce yourselves and the basic talking points you intend to cover. Holding a practice session is an excellent idea and will help you feel more confident and prepared for the actual meeting. Because appointments with elected officials are often brief (usually fifteen to twenty minutes), taking the time to prepare carefully will help you use that time wisely to focus on your most important issues.

You may also want to divide up roles for the meeting. It is helpful to have one person designated as the leader, who can guide the introductions, move things along, and be sure that the right questions get asked at the end of the meeting. It is also very useful to have someone take notes of your meeting so you'll remember what has been said.

Dress for Success

Government at the state and local level is a formal institution, so plan to dress professionally for your meeting. Elected officials and their staffs usually will be wearing suits and ties for men, and suits, dress slacks or skirts, with a blouse or dress sweater for women. You are likely to be taken more seriously if you dress in a similar fashion.

Research

Do some research to help prepare for the meeting:

1. What positions has the Senator/Representative taken on the arts/arts education?

Most elected official's web sites include information about them and their positions on various issues:

AzCA/AA Legislative Action Center
<http://capwiz.com/artsusa/az/home/>

Arizona State Legislature:
<http://www.azleg.gov/>

Research the person you are meeting with. Make an effort to know your elected official's position on the arts and arts education in Arizona.

Knowing basic facts about your elected officials and their positions can help you establish a connection with them and increase your understanding of what might motivate them to support our cause.

Important points to consider for your meeting

Most elected officials need to be convinced of two things for them to support the arts and arts education.

- First, they must understand why the arts and arts education are vital to Arizona.
- Second, they must be convinced that supporting the arts and arts education will be a political win for them come re-election.



The following talking points can aid you in beginning your discussion with your elected officials.

Arts in Arizona

- The arts are an economic driver in Arizona. With almost 50,000 employees state wide, the arts industry is vital to Arizona's future.
- The arts support jobs and provide important tax revenue.
- The arts create a sense of place. A rich and vibrant arts community attracts business in the form of companies and employees.

Arts Education

- Arts Education in K-12 schools teaches our youth to be innovative, not just creative.
- The 21st century economy will be competitive and driven by innovation. Our world faces difficult questions and trials, like the current economic turn down, and it will take innovative ideas and follow through on those ideas to create a stable and democratic future.
- Innovation is and has been the thing that gives America a competitive edge. We live in the greatest country in the world. We have more opportunity to become successful and pursue "life, liberty and happiness" than people of any other time. Our nation's greatness is built on a foundation of innovation and competitive spirit. Our youth must be given the opportunity to learn how to think in innovative ways, or our country faces losing that competitive edge that innovation creates. Already foreign graduate students out number American born graduate students in this country.
- The Arts are an essential part of culture and civilization; we must continue to teach in the Arts in K-12 schools.
- Civilization began with the written word and with painting in primitive forms. If we are to continue to grow as a civilization, we must support Arts Education in K-12 schools.

The Day of Your Meeting

- When you arrive, each team member should introduce themselves. Say your name and that you are a constituent, a parent, and educator or anything else that might be important to the legislator. Note if you have a connection with your representative.
- Always be brief and stay on point—your meeting time will be very limited, usually fifteen to twenty minutes. This is when your team's preparation pays off. Having your general talking points written up will help you present your information clearly and directly.
- When speaking with your legislator, the most important thing is talk about personal experiences with the arts and arts education. Personal accounts are the most likely to affect your elected official.
- Stay focused so that you will be understood and make your point well since a short, articulate statement will be far more effective than an elaborate story.
- Listen carefully to what your elected official has to say and clearly and succinctly answer any questions she or he asks.
- Speak slowly and clearly, without using jargon, slang, acronyms, abbreviations or terms that other people may not understand.



Sample Introductions:

Good afternoon, Representative Smith. My name is Robert Jones, and I am a lifelong resident of our state, as you are. I am a small business owner in Tucson and a resident of Legislative District 28. I very much appreciate this opportunity to talk with you about arts and arts education in Arizona.

- Speak positively about arts and arts education and how both benefit our state. Make your own position clear and let it speak for itself.
- If you do not know something, do not make it up. Explain that you do not know the answer and offer to follow up with the information. If you do offer this, make sure you really do follow-up.
- A simple leave behind that covers the important facts is important. AzCA will provide one for Arts Congress.

Remember that most appointments are brief—about fifteen to twenty minutes. Leave gracefully when your time is up and be careful not to overstay your welcome. If you are invited to stay longer, by all means do so if you have the time.

A. After the Meeting

Each visitor should send a thank you note immediately—this is a quick and easy way to further your relationship with your legislator. If you also met with someone on the staff, write them a separate thank you note as well. Be sure to follow up as soon as possible with any promised additional information.

Sample Thank You Letter

Date
The Honorable/Dr./Mr./Mrs. [First and Last name]
Arizona State Legislature
City, State and Zip

Dear Senator/Representative (Last name):

Thank you for taking the time to meet with us on [date] to discuss the arts and arts education in [insert name of district/state here]. We appreciate your time and attention to this issue that is of vital importance to our state.

As we discussed in the meeting,

- The arts are an important sector of the Arizona economy
- Arts Education is vital to the future success of our students.

[If applicable] Thank you for your support of the arts in Arizona.
If you have any further questions, please feel free to be in touch with me.

Thank you,
(Your name)
(Your address)
(Your Telephone Number)
(E-mail address)

Report the Results of Your Visit

The information you gather in your meeting is critical to our efforts to build state wide support for the arts and arts education. Please contact AzCA/AA at 602-253-6535 after your meeting.



Participating in the 50th Session of the Arizona Legislature

Tracking the Progress of the session

Watch Live

The best way to be informed is to participate. AzCA/AA encourages all of our advocates to regularly participate in our state legislature by watching the proceedings live. To watch go to, <http://www.azleg.gov/> and click on the “Live Proceedings” link.

Tracking a Bill

You can follow any piece of legislation using the Bills section of the Arizona legislature website. <http://www.azleg.gov/Bills.asp>

Attend in Person

The Gallery is open to visitors and observers at the Arizona state legislature. You are welcome to attend at any time that the Senate or House are meeting. The Galleries are located on the 3rd floors of the respective Senate and House buildings. Typically legislators convene on the floor between 1:00 pm and 2:00pm.

If you decide to attend the session in person, please remember to dress and act with decorum. Visitors are expected to quietly observe out of respect for our state government. You may be asked to attend the session in the gallery as part of a large group that will be recognized by the floor. At most you will be asked to quietly rise in recognition of the group, but it is essential for you to follow the lead of the organizers and Senator or Representative recognizing the group.

Attending the session is a great way to understand the inner working of our state legislature. If you do attend, please always keep in mind that showing respect by following the expected etiquette is very important.

Committee Meetings

You can also follow the goings on of committees, in person and online. You can track the progress of committees at:

<http://www.azleg.gov/StandingCom.asp>

<http://www.azleg.gov/InterimCommittees.asp>

<http://www.azleg.gov/CommitteeAgendas.asp?Body=H>

<http://www.azleg.gov/CommitteeAgendas.asp?Body=S>

<http://www.azleg.gov/CommitteeAgendas.asp?Body=J>

<http://www.azleg.gov/ConferenceCommittees.asp?CCType=SCHEDULES>



Advocate Resources

Arizona Citizens for the Arts

There are 3 important steps that you can take to utilize the resources of AzCA/AA and become a more effective arts and arts education advocate.

1. Sign up for our Arts Action Alerts online
2. Become a member of AzCA today
3. Attend Arts Congress

You can sign up for all three at our website, www.azcitizensforthearts.org