

Eight Simple Ways to Get Involved in TMA Advocacy

GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY makes all the difference during a legislative session, which is why physicians play a key role advancing medicine's agenda.

There are many factors in play if a bill makes it to the finish line during a legislative session – the importance, relevancy, and timing of the issue; who carries the bill in the House and Senate; the persuasive message; and support surrounding the issue.

Another key factor – and often the most important – is you, the legislator's constituent.

Lawmakers keep a file for each bill they work on. It's also where they compile all their constituents' phone messages, emails, letters, comments, etc. When a bill is heard in a committee, or in a House or Senate hearing, the first thing legislators will do is ask their staff what their constituents think about the issue – what have they heard?

Local advocacy is critical and does make a difference, which is why even during an interim – the 18 months between each legislative session – TMA and the TMA Alliance encourage physicians, alliance members, and medical students to meet and build strong relationships with their legislators. (See "TMA Moments in Time," page 26.)

Your strong voice is needed to improve the practice of medicine today and for future generations. And you don't have to be an advocacy expert. **Here are eight simple steps to get started.**

1) Get to know your legislator.

When medicine speaks, legislators do listen, especially if they've heard from you before. Work through your county medical society to set up a local physician meeting with your state representative or state senator. Very often, you or your colleagues know them personally. There is no substitute for this personal relationship.

2) Update your contact list.

Add your elected officials' name and contact information to your phone. Find their phone, and email and mailing addresses, and their staff's information at tma.tips/TexasLege.

3) Use social media.

Follow your legislators on their Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn accounts. It's an easy way to learn about your elected officials and their interests. Do NOT use social media as a place to debate issues.

4) Register for First Tuesdays at the Capitol.

Mark your calendars for TMA's 2023 First Tuesdays at the Capitol. Join your colleagues the first Tuesday of each month in February, March, April, and May when physicians, medical students, and alliance members descend on the Capitol to meet with their legislators. Register at www.texmed.org/FirstTuesdays.

5) Take action.

Write, email, or call your legislator when critical issues arise. TMA makes it easy. All you must do is respond to a TMA Action Alert using the message provided or write your own message. Use TMA's Grassroots Action Center at www.texmed.org/Grassroots. It only takes a minute.

6) Download the VoterVoice app.

Respond to a TMA Action Alert via VoterVoice. All you need to do is download and install the app at tma.tips/GetVoterVoice. Then you can take action in just a few minutes via your phone.

7) Bookmark TMA's Texas Legislature page.

Follow medicine's progress and actions during the legislative session at www.texmed.org/Legislature.

8) Learn more about TEXPAC.

The Texas Medical Association Political Action Committee (TEXPAC) is the political arm of TMA. It's the largest bipartisan political action committee in the state and ranks first in size among other state medical association PACs. A successful year on the campaign trail frequently translates into success at the Capitol. For more information visit www.texpac.org.

