



ADVOCACY TOOL KIT



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The MUSNAVC Advocacy Toolkit includes important advocacy information from the MOAA Government Relations team. MOAA has long been recognized for our One Powerful Voice which can be attributed to the efforts of the Board of Directors, Staff, chapter system and members. MOAA was recognized as one of the top lobbyist associations in Washington D.C. for 2017, the 11th year in a row to earn this distinction and the only Military/Veteran Service Organization to be named. Also included in this tool kit is information from MOAA's 2017-2021 Strategic Plan.



The Association of Public Health Nurses has graciously granted us permission to use key elements of their 2016 Public Health Policy Advocacy Guidebook and Tool Kit. Their information follows their logo.



Advocacy Information from the MOAA Strategic Plan 2017-2021

MOAA's Advocacy Goals and Strategies

MOAA's overall ADVOCACY goal is to ensure government enacts and maintains policies to sustain a career force of the size and quality needed to maintain a strong national defense. Concurrently, MOAA advocates for sufficient funds for training, readiness, modernization, and end strength to support the National Security Strategy. During the period of this plan, our main goals are:

- Ensure Regular Military Compensation is not eroded by measures aimed at shifting the burden of some defense-related costs directly onto the servicemember.
- Ensure military pay growth is maintained consistent with the private sector
 - As determined by the Employment Cost Index (ECI).
- Repeal the Survivor Benefit Plan/Dependency and Indemnity Compensation offset.
- Protect TRICARE and other health care-related programs from disproportional fee increases.
- Support continuation of the VA's Veterans Choice Program; ensure veterans retain flexibility to access health care.
- Improve health care solutions for women veterans.
- Ensure progress continues in the Defense Health Agency's new role as the leader of all military treatment facilities.
- Protect the commissary benefit.
- Modernize the GI Bill without compromising its effect on recruiting and retention.
- Increase incentives for businesses to hire veterans and spouses.

MOAA's main strategies to achieve these goals include:

- Execute our leadership role in The Military Coalition regarding survivor and compensation-related issues as well as health care for currently serving troops and veterans.
- Ensure every legislator is aware of MOAA's priorities and the data we use to underpin our positions and legislative recommendations. Record distribution of MOAA's annual legislative priorities and track engagements during Storming the Hill as well as follow-on visits by MOAA staff.
- Continue to build relationships between MOAA leadership and key legislators and leading members of the executive branch, including the secretaries of DoD and the VA.
- Ensure MOAA maintains and enhances its reputation for legislative engagement based on reasoned and analytical research.
- Emphasize increased and targeted engagement on Capitol Hill and with DoD and the VA, track and record engagements centrally, and share results broadly.
- Develop advocacy narratives focused on valuation and financial impact to individuals and families.



Advocacy Information from APHN

Being an Effective Advocate to Influence Public Policy

Key Terms

Advocacy: strategy to influence policy makers when they make laws and regulations, distribute resources, and make other decisions that affect peoples' lives. The goal of advocacy is ***policy change***. (Page 6 in the APHN Advocacy Guidebook and Tool Kit)

Legislation: action by Congress, any state legislature, any local council, or similar governing body, with respect to acts, bills, resolutions, or similar items or by the public in referendum, ballot initiative, constitutional amendment, or similar procedure. (Page 8)

Coalition: a group of interdependent people focused on advancing or opposing an issue. A coalition's power to affect public policy lies in its ability to present a united front representing many, many members. (Page 3)

Spending:

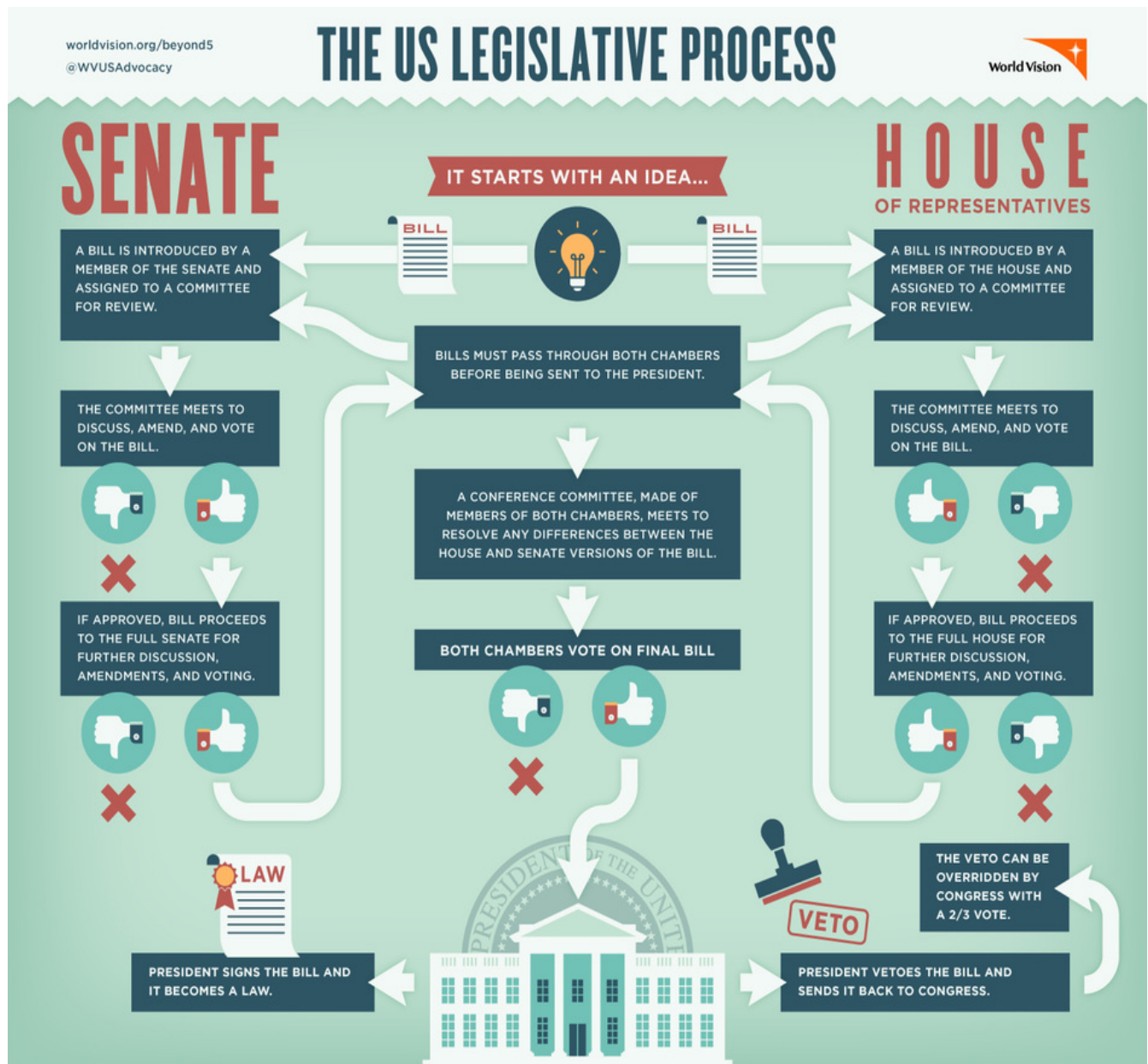
Mandatory spending is made up of earned-benefit or entitlement programs, and the spending for those programs is determined by eligibility rules rather than the appropriations process. Mandatory spending makes up nearly two-thirds of the total federal budget. (p.46)

Discretionary spending refers to the portion of the budget that goes through the annual appropriations process each year. Congress can choose to increase or decrease spending on any of those programs in a year. (Page 46)

Interest on debt is the interest the government pays on its accumulated debt, minus interest income received by the government for assets it owns. (Page 46)

Federal Budget Process (Page 41)

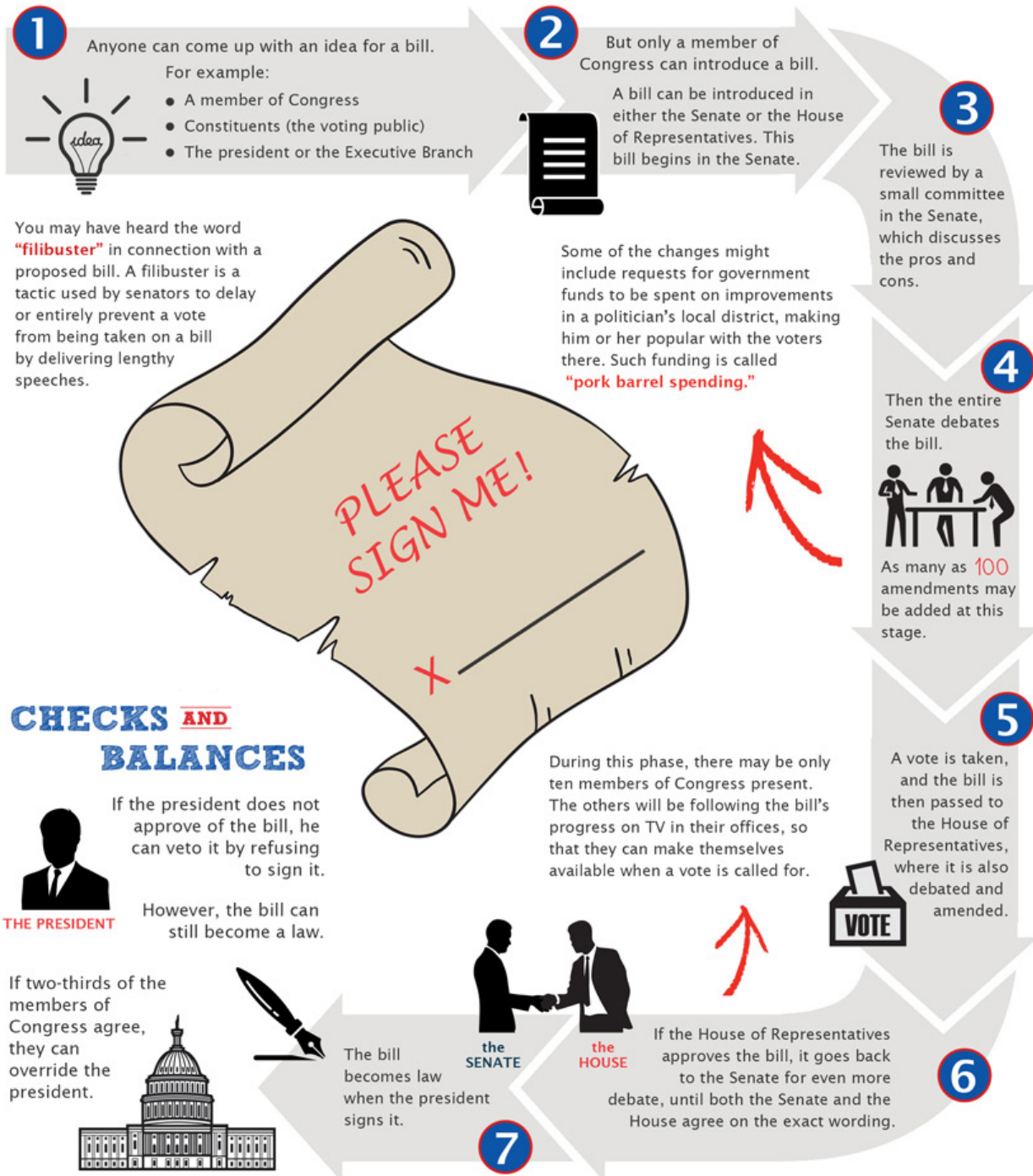
The federal budget cycle has four phases. The **first** phase is agency planning; the **second** phase covers budget review by the Office of Management and Budget. These two phases together amount to the President's budget formulation. The **third** phase is the Congressional appropriations cycle; and the **fourth and final** phase is the execution of the budget by the agencies starting October 1, the beginning of the fiscal year. Altogether, it takes the machinery of government well over two years to formulate, appropriate, and execute a single fiscal year's budget.



How a Bill becomes a Law



All U.S. laws start out as bills in Congress. For a bill to become a law can be a lengthy process, and many bills don't make it through. Of the approximately 5,000 bills that are introduced each year, only about 150 actually become laws.



Top Ten Rules of Advocacy (Page 10)

1. Get to know and the concerns, priorities and perspectives of the person(s) with whom you are speaking.
2. Acquaint yourself with the staff members for the legislators, committees and resource officials with whom you will be working.
3. Identify fellow advocates and partners in the community to better understand the process, monitor legislation, and assess strengths and weaknesses.
4. Identify the groups and other legislators with whom you may need to negotiate for changes in legislation; yesterday's opponent may be today's ally.
5. Foster and strengthen relationships with allies and work with legislators who are flexible and tend to keep an open mind.
6. Be honest, straightforward and realistic when working with legislators and their staff.
7. Be polite, remember names and thank those who help you.
8. Learn the legislative process and understand it well.
9. Be brief, clear, accurate, persuasive, timely, persistent, grateful and polite when presenting your position and communicating what you need/want from the legislator or staff member.
10. Be sure to follow up with legislators and their staff. Be a reliable resource for them today and in the future.

Writing Letters to Communicate with Legislators (Page 21)

1. State your purpose in the first paragraph.
2. If the letter pertains to a specific piece of legislation, identify it accordingly, e.g., House bill: H.R.____, Senate bill: S. ____.
3. Be courteous, but to the point. Include key information and use examples to support your position. Describe your practice and the patient population you serve, if appropriate.
4. Address only one issue in each letter and try to keep the letter to one page.
5. Frame your message in terms of local effect. Hearing how an issue affects the community's health facilities, local public health agency, and nurses and other constituents of the legislator's district will have a greater impact on the legislator than hearing how it affects the state.
6. Be constructive. If the legislation deals with a problem you admit exists but you think the bill is the wrong approach, explain what you believe to be the right approach.
7. Use your own stationery, not hospital or agency stationery. Do not give the impression that you are speaking for an organization unless you are a designated spokesperson.
8. Know the committees on which your legislators serve and indicate in the letter if the bill is being brought before those committees.
9. Timing is important. Try to express your opinion on a bill when it is in committee.
10. Sign your name with RN after it. Include any other credentials you may have, such as PhD, DNP, PHN, APHN-BC.
11. Personalize your letter. Legislators pay more attention to these than to ones mass-produced. Form letters and response cards should be used only if you have no other alternative for expressing your opinions.
12. Be sure your correct address is on the letter and the envelope.
13. Edit carefully. Invite a friend or colleague to read your letter and provide feedback.
14. Read your letter aloud and listen to the flow, grammar and tone. Revise your letter if needed.
15. Keep a copy of all letters that you send.

Rules for an Advocate to Remember (Page 27)

1. You are a source of information. Legislators have limited time, few staff members and, at times, limited interest on an issue. You are the one who can fill in the information gap.
2. Maintain credibility. Give accurate information.
3. Know your supporters. The legislator will want to know what group, individuals, state agencies and/or other legislators are working with your organization on the issue(s) you are presenting.
4. Know your opposition. Be prepared by understanding the opposition's viewpoint. Anticipate their arguments and provide the legislator with rebuttals and answers to those arguments.
5. Remember that you are developing a relationship. Make the legislator aware of any personal connections you may have, even if you think they are insignificant. It could make a difference.
6. Do not be afraid to admit you don't know. If your legislator asks you for information you do not have or asks something you do not know the answer to, tell them you do not know the answer and offer to obtain the information for them. Provide this information in a follow-up meeting, phone call, or letter.
7. Be specific when you are asking for something. When you want a vote, information or answers to questions, ask directly and expect that you will get an answer.
8. Follow-up. After the meeting write a thank you note for the meeting. Later, follow-up with an inquiry to ask if the legislator did what had been agreed to in the meeting, such as voting a certain way. It is important that you thank legislators if they did, or ask them for an explanation if they did not vote or otherwise take a position as had been agreed to.
9. Don't burn your bridges. Remain calm. It can be easy to get emotional over issues you feel strongly about. Remember to leave your meeting on good terms so you can go back to the conversation later. As noted above, your strongest opposition today could be your strongest ally later on.
10. You are the boss. Your tax money pays the legislators' salaries, staff and office operations. You should be courteous, but not intimidated. Most legislators will be thankful for your input.

Resources

1. Military Officers Association of America
<http://www.moaa.org/>
MOAA Legislative Action Center
<http://takeaction.moaa.org/?4>
2. Association of Public Health Nurses. 2016 Public Health Policy Advocacy Guide Book and Tool Kit.
<http://phnurse.org/resources/Documents/APHN%20Public%20Health%20Policy%20Advocacy%20Guide%20Book%20and%20Tool%20Kit%202016.pdf>
3. A-Z Index of U.S. Government Departments and Agencies.
<https://www.usa.gov/federal-agencies>
4. U.S. Senate Home Page.
<https://www.senate.gov/>
5. U.S. House of Representative Home Page.
<http://www.house.gov/>
6. Legislators' names and addresses. Congressional directory listing at <http://thomas.loc.gov>
7. The U.S. President's Cabinet.
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/cabinet>



Our **MOAA Uniformed Services Nurse Advocates Virtual Chapter** has a major focus on advocating for healthcare related legislation that relates to our service members and their families, past and present. We know that this important work will also have an impact on our future forces.

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Please feel free to forward your comments/suggestions to: musnavc@gmail.com

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Meet MOAA's Leadership and Registered Lobbyists



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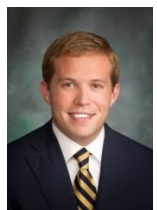
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